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Henry Kapau.

Engraved for The Cambridge Historical Society
from an original portrait in the possession of
Richard Henry Dana

NOTES ON
COLONEL HENRY VASSALL
(1721-1769)

HIS WIFE PENELOPE ROYALL
HIS HOUSE AT CAMBRIDGE
AND
HIS SLAVES TONY & DARBY

*"There is so much that no one knows,—
So much unreachd that none suppose;
What flaws! what faults on every page!
When Finis comes."*

BY
SAMUEL FRANCIS BATCHELDER

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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[The following study is an amplification of a brief paper read at the meeting of the Cambridge Historical Society on January 26, 1915, in the house of Major John Vassall (now occupied by Miss Alice Mary Longfellow) when the portraits here reproduced were first shown. It is now reprinted from Volume X of the Society's Proceedings.

For these reproductions the author is indebted to the generous kindness of Richard Henry Dana, Esq., the purchaser of the originals. He has since presented the latter to the Massachusetts Historical Society, under certain conditions for their transfer to the Cambridge Historical Society when it shall have a sufficient endowment and a suitable fireproof building for its collections.]

COL. HENRY VASSALL

THE Cambridge Loyalists or "Tories" have suffered a somewhat undeserved neglect at the hands of our historians. Numerous, opulent, cultivated, picturesque, and exceedingly interesting in themselves, they also form the outstanding figures in the village annals during the middle of the eighteenth century — annals which otherwise would be colorless to the vanishing-point. Economically they contributed vastly to the reputation and resources of the town, whole sections of which were opened up and brought to a high state of development by their wealth, intelligence, and taste. Politically they were the conscientious upholders of that

realm of law and order against which their fellow countrymen saw fit to revolt, with results that long hung in the balance and that — had it not been for the unexpected folly of their leaders and the equally unexpected rise of a first-order genius among the revolutionists — might well have vindicated their position completely. Meantime they operated as the flywheel on the overheated engine of partisan passion, delaying and steadying its wilder impulses and preventing the ungoverned excesses into which it might otherwise have run. Socially and intellectually they brought to a primitive community, which had scarcely advanced beyond the Elizabethan era when it was founded, the amenities, comforts, and ideals of the highest civilization of the day, and thus paved the way for that cultured elegance which was to distinguish the neighborhood for many years to come.¹ In the thin and vitiated mental atmosphere that had felt no more stimulating influences than the meagre precepts of Harvard College (which itself was experiencing a time of weakness and change) they gave the first inspirations of a fuller and richer life. They were, in brief, the advance guard of those forces that have transformed the isolated, bucolic hamlet² into a complex modern city, at once eagerly progressive and curiously conservative.

At the same time the scanty attention that has been paid to the Tories is not unnatural. Out of sight, out of mind; and the less said about those into whose inheritance we have so coolly entered, the better. The adherents of a lost cause are soon forgotten amongst a democracy where success is the test and the justification of all things. Even the genealogist, struggling to ascend the local family-trees, passes by those temporary stocks that have left no scions among us to-day. Mostly exotic, they grafted them-

¹ By an attraction that deserves a better name than coincidence, both of the most famous men of letters that Cambridge has ever claimed fixed their abodes, it will be recalled, in mansions built by the Loyalists.

² The sympathetic student of pre-revolutionary Cambridge must bear constantly in mind the extreme diminutiveness of his field. The settled part of town was practically confined to the vicinity of Harvard College, and in 1765 contained a white population with the easily remembered total of 1492. Thus, instead of standing as now fourth or fifth in order of size, Cambridge was then about fortieth on the Massachusetts list, overwhelmingly and apparently hopelessly outranked by such important centres as Sutton, Scituate, Ipswich, and Rehoboth. The largest town after Boston was Marblehead. Cf. Benton, *Early Census Making in Mass.*

selves, as it were, upon the growing community, throve, multiplied, and then, before the chilling breath of discord and revolution, suddenly withered away and vanished, leaving no roots, no fruits, and only here and there an empty husk. The dead leaves of their records have been suffered to whirl off into limbo. Their fibres never sank deeper than the superficial soil of New England life. The native population, differing from them in religion, in occupations, in habits, in philosophy, and in politics, at first tolerated them, then distrusted them, and at last feared and assailed them; and when they were extirpated spent nearly a century in obliterating their vestiges.

Of all that ghostly company no members are more difficult to trace, considering their numbers¹ and wealth, than the great family of the Vassalls. Like strange old-world galleons, they moored for a time in the pleasant summer waters of New England, enjoying and enriching themselves among the codfish; but with the first autumnal northeaster they dragged their anchors and drifted helplessly away before the blast, the angry waves closing over their wake, marked only by an occasional bit of wreckage or a fragment of flotsam jettisoned to lighten a sinking ship. Many of their friends among the Massachusetts Loyalists played memorable and manly parts in the troublous sixties and seventies of the revolutionary century — some are still notorious for a precisely opposite course. Not a few of their native-born neighbors, humble and uncouth as they may have seemed in the eyes of those fine gentry, are to-day vivid national figures and familiar household words. But the name of Vassall in New England is almost as if it had never been. A few stately country-seats, some musty court and registry entries, an obscure lane in Cambridge, a township in the Maine forests, some scattered stones in long-closed churchyards, and a monument in King's Chapel to a London ancestor are all that now preserve it from utter forgetfulness. For anything beyond these mechanical and artificial memorials, for any vital impression on the history of the time, for any tablet in the hall of fame (even in the Cambridge corner thereof), for any human interest, in legend, song, or story, we look in vain.

¹ Harris, the authority on the subject, enumerates no less than sixty-eight who bore the name in New England.

The very personalities of the heads of the house have perished, or become dim and uncertain. Their letters and diaries are lost. Scarcely a scrap of manuscript survives to show us their characteristics and activities, intimacies and antipathies, hopes and fears. Up to the present time we have not even known how they looked. For though prominent members of the class that most liberally patronized the praiseworthy efforts of the Colonial portrait painters, their likenesses, numerous as they must have been, were either carried away in their hegira, or have suffered a variety of ignominious fates, scorned as "nothing but pictures of those miserable old Tories." The portraits of Henry Vassall and his wife Penelope Royall, auspiciously recovered within the past twelvemonth from a descendant distant in more senses than one, have therefore a value even more unique than that always attaching to the work of the master hand that painted them.¹

¹ The exhibition of these portraits before the Society was the occasion for the preparation of this paper. Their history after leaving Cambridge appears to be as follows:

From Henry Vassall's daughter Elizabeth, who married Dr. Charles Russell, they passed to her child Rebecca, who married in 1793 David Pearce of Boston, and thence to his son Charles Russell Pearce. While in the custody of the last named, they were taken to Baltimore, about 1825. Through his daughter Elizabeth Vassall Pearce, who married Mr. Prentiss, they were transmitted to his granddaughter Elizabeth Vassall Prentiss, who married Oliver H. McCowen. In 1914 Mrs. McCowen, being about to remove from Baltimore to Burmah, offered them to the Cambridge Historical Society, and they were purchased by the president, Richard H. Dana, 3d. They are now hung in the Treasure Room of the Harvard Library.

The canvases of Henry Vassall and Penelope Royall are 25 by 30 and 15 by 17½ inches respectively. When received they proved to be in excellent condition, needing only varnishing and a little retouching of the backgrounds. That of Colonel Vassall represents a man in the prime of life, half-length, full face, slightly smiling, chin dimpled. He wears a powdered wig, ruffled lace neck-cloth, brown embroidered satin coat. The coloring is brilliant and the face full of character. The bust portrait of his wife is that of a young, sweet, refined woman, face oval, eyes large, features regular, brown hair dressed high with a rose on the left side. Her citron-colored dress is low cut. Neither in size, coloring, nor expression is this picture as striking as the other, and one cannot but feel that the subject did not appeal to the painter as strongly.

Family tradition assigns both portraits to the brush of Copley. Mr. Frank W. Bayley, the leading authority on the subject, announces after careful inspection that tradition is here undoubtedly correct, and proposes to include both pictures in his catalogue of the works of that master. The style and handling are precisely those of Copley at the period when these canvases must have been executed; there is, moreover, documentary

I

The biographer of these Vassalls seeks in vain to vivify his sketch with the warm coloring and well-placed details so happily employed by their limner. With the present materials he can but trace some faint outlines on a misty background. Certain names and dates stand out clearly enough.¹ Henry Vassall's position among the far-flung branches of his family tree may be seen from the diagram appended. Born on Christmas Day, 1721, the fourteenth of eighteen children, of a fine old English stock long resident in the West Indies, he too seems to have lived, until nearly twenty years of age, on the great family estates in Jamaica. By that time his father, Leonard, and his older brothers, Lewis, John, and William, had already been for several years in Boston, doubtless attracted thither not only by its great commercial prosperity, but also by its superior social and educational opportunities. Of these the boys had taken full advantage. John graduated from Harvard in 1732 and two years later married Elizabeth Phips, daughter of the lieutenant governor. In 1736, to be near his father-in-law's delightful family circle in Cambridge,² he bought there, from the widow of John

evidence that he painted several others of the Royall family and their connections. See *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collections*, vol. 71, page 284.

Both the frames are old — possibly the originals (many of Copley's frames were made by Paul Revere) — and have merely been regilded. Copies of both portraits were made some years ago for Mr. James Russell Soley of New York City. An indifferent painting of Miss Elizabeth, aged about sixteen, is now in possession of Mrs. H. L. Threadcraft of Richmond, Virginia. Portraits of other members of the Vassall family by Hoppner and Reynolds are in Holland House, London.

(Information chiefly supplied by Mrs. S. M. de Gozzaldi and Mr. R. H. Dana, 3d. See also notes, pages 13, 15.)

¹ For the authoritative data on the family history see the exhaustive researches of Edward Doubleday Harris, *The Vassalls of New England* — the basis of this sketch — reprinted from *N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register*, xvii, 56, 113.

² The Phips family were the pioneers of the Loyalist migration to Cambridge that reached its height about the middle of the century. Spencer Phips, adopted son of the fabulously wealthy Sir William Phips, bought a "farm" in 1706 that embraced all of East Cambridge and part of Cambridgeport, and soon afterward the estate on Arrow Street that became the homestead. His lavish hospitality, together with the distinguished alliances made by many of his children, who set up splendid establishments near

Frizzell, the old mansion (now 94 Brattle Street), with about seven acres surrounding it, which thereupon became permanently associated with his patronymic. In 1741, shortly after the death of his father, he sold it to his brother Henry, then a lad just coming of age, who in this connection makes his first appearance on the local records, as "now residing at Boston, late of the Island of Jamaica, Planter." With the domicile went the "barn and outhouses," most of the furniture, a chariot, a chaise, and four horses. Included in the same deed were thirty acres of "mowing and pasture land" across the Charles, in the westerly angle between the river and "the King's Road from Cambridge to Boston."¹

The house, we may note, was already of very respectable antiquity. From the infancy of the town, indeed, a dwelling seems to have occupied the site. It was a delightful location, pleasantly near the river, and just "without the walls" of the original *pallysadoe* that surrounded the first settlement, and that here followed the line of the present Ash Street. It thus formed an early example of a model suburban estate, combining easy access to the centre of society, business, and education at "the village," with a rural peace to which that centre must have seemed in comparison a bustling metropolis. Both mansion and grounds, as Henry Vassall found them, had been enlarged and beautified by successive owners.² He continued the process, rounding out the estate by further purchases³ and building, him, proved a magnet that drew to Cambridge a large portion of its richest and most fashionable ante-revolutionary elements. Upon his death in 1757 the family traditions were well continued by his son David.

¹ Middlesex Deeds, 43/271. About on the site of the present University Boat House.

² For exhaustive (and occasionally confusing) details of the numerous changes in boundaries, construction, and ownership for over two hundred and fifty years see the articles by three generations of the Batchelder family, the proprietors since 1841, in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, xlv, 191; *The Cambridge of 1776*, 93; *Historic Guide to Cambridge*, 94. From them the following reconstruction is chiefly extracted. The grounds are now cut up by modern streets, dating from about 1870, and are crowded with heterogeneous dwellings. The mansion itself has served for years as a "select boarding house."

³ In 1746 he bought from his brother John somewhat more than an acre on the westerly side, extending from the Watertown road to "Amos Marratt's marsh," and the next year the half acre on the corner of the Watertown road and the "highway to the brick wharf," as Ash Street was

among other items, the east wing, with its elaborate interior finish, and along the street fronts the low brick garden-wall, portions of which still remain.

The place, as he left it, differed so materially from its present shrunk and mutilated condition that some effort of the imagination is needed to picture it in its palmy days. Let us approach in our mind's eye, that most accommodating of conveyances. The grounds extend along the road to Watertown (Brattle Street) from Windmill Lane ¹ (Ash Street) on the east ² to John Vassall's pasture (Longfellow Park) on the west. Tall hedges of flowering hawthorns mark the lateral boundaries. On the north front, just inside the wall, towers a magnificent row of five-score acacia trees. The house stands farther back from the road than to-day, for a ten-foot strip was clipped from the front yard when Brattle Street was widened in 1870.³ From the rear of the dwelling southward nearly to the ebb and flow of the river in its salt marshes ⁴ extend the famous gardens. We may saunter along their white-pebbled walks, edged with neat box rows, and admire

also described. (Middlesex Deeds, 47/350.) By these purchases the eastern and western boundaries were completed as they have existed until recent times. Both transactions were doubtless connected with the Jamaica "deal" mentioned on page 36 herein.

¹ Although frequently described as a highway, the present Ash Street was for generations practically a private way, separating the properties of Vassall and Brattle, and leading to land owned by the Marretts on the river bank. In 1750, William Brattle, Henry Vassall, and Edward Marrett Jr. obtained favorable action by the "Sessions" (then fulfilling the functions of County Commissioners) on their petition "Shewing that there hath between the Land of the said William & Henry been a Gate or pair of Barrs time out of Mind in the Lane leading to the Brick Wharffe in Cambridge, that there is a Gate now hanging in Said Place, they pray leave to continue the Same in the Same Place 'till the further Order of this Court." Page 100, volume "1748-1761," Clerk's Office, East Cambridge.

² More nearly southeast, as north should be northeast, etc., but for the sake of simplicity the cardinal bearings of the old deeds have been followed in the text throughout.

³ On this "improving" occasion the acacias were sacrificed, and the brick wall was perforce taken down. The part opposite the lawn was rebuilt on the new line, but this time capped by a granite coping instead of the two planks set in an "A" shape that formerly topped it. Opposite the house it was replaced by a high rampart of imitation stone, with entrance gate-posts, etc., in the fashionable taste of that day.

⁴ Mount Auburn Street of course had not then invaded "the marsh." The estate, however, seems never to have gone beyond the upland.

their choice shrubs, vines, and fruit trees, many, even to the great purple mulberry, imported from Europe. Under the willows at the foot of the grounds we may pause to drink from a fine spring.

Along the western wing of the house a cobbled courtyard (now the beginning of Hawthorn Street) opens from the road. At the head of it, just clear of the end of the wing, stands the great stable, whence we hear the stamp and champ of a long row of horses.¹ On the right of the court is the coach-house, sheltering "the coach, the charriott, the chaise, the curricie, the old curricie,"² and other vehicular precursors of the limousine and the motorcycle. Here also we may curiously inspect the owner's private fire-engine, the first machine of the kind in Cambridge annals, and a striking illustration of the complete and costly style in which the family establishment was maintained.³

This western wing is the most ancient portion of the fabric, as we may infer from its huge chimney-stack laid in clay instead of mortar, and its low rooms finished with plaster made of calcined oyster shells, — carrying us back to the days of makeshifts for proper lime. Its southward extension is continued by a long ell⁴ (now much shortened), containing kitchen, "well room," garden shed, and other "offices," some floored with mother earth, some with hexagonal sections of tree trunks — an early example of wood-block paving. Although we evidently have here the strictly domestic side of the building, the whole house, elabo-

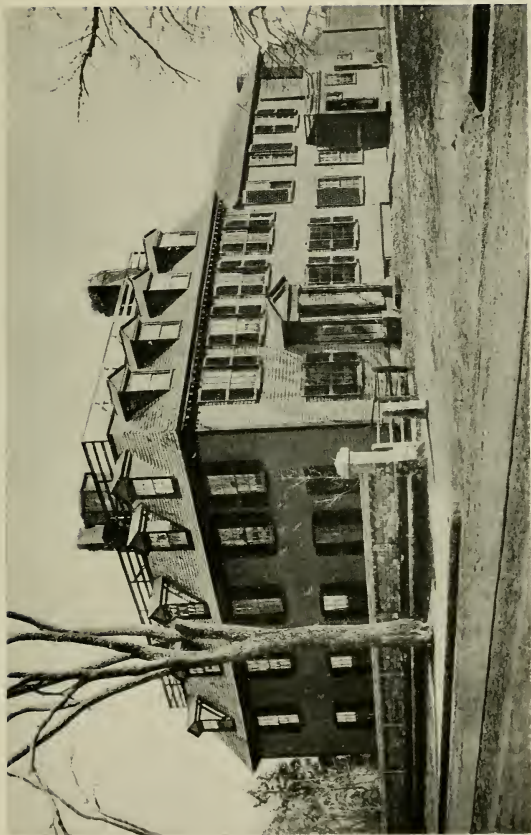
¹ A memorandum in the little account book later described gives the heights of ten horses by name — "Ruggles," "Lechmere," "Boy," etc. Two of them were ponies. In 1758 Henry Vassall had so many horses that he could not accommodate them all, and had to pay Gershom Flagg "on acct. of rent for Stable £45."

² Inventory of 1769. See Appendix A.

³ It was so much admired that there was some talk of its being "improved for the town's use;" but the proposition was finally negatived by the March meeting of 1755, the conservative majority plainly preferring to put their trust in the good old bucket-line rather than in any new-fangled notions. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 134.

The Colonel's elaborate forehandedness was later imitated by his brother-in-law, young Isaac Royall. The latter's inventory of 1778 gives "Fire Engine £250," with sundry entries for "time spent about ye Engine to get it mended and cleaned." Middlesex Probate, No. 19546, Old Series.

⁴ A sketch plan of about 1875 gives the total length of the west side as ninety-one feet, of the north front sixty-three feet.



HENRY VASSALL HOUSE FROM THE NORTHWEST

About 1872

rate and extensive as it is, bears the character of the true homestead.¹ It sets low on the ground. Its main roofs, crowned by a small cupola in the middle, are of the good old gambrel type. Its outer walls are mostly covered with "rough cast" or stucco, a logical finish for their interior construction of oak beams filled in with brick. Even some of the partitions, on account of the successive enlargements of the edifice, are of solid masonry.

On entering we find that these enlargements have produced a rambling arrangement of rooms very different from the four-square primness of the typical "Colonial mansion" to which we are accustomed. The ground plan is like a broad, squat letter **U**, opening to the south. Parallel eastern and western wings of different periods enclose between them the great dining room, which occupies the entire middle section, and thus abruptly bisects the usual "long entry" from the eastern to the western door. The chambers of the second floor follow the same curious arrangement. To reach them there are three separate staircases. That of the eastern wing is still one of the handsomest examples of Colonial woodwork to be seen in Cambridge. The apartments are known, according to their rich and diversified finish, as "the blue room," "the best room," "the marble chamber," "the green chamber," "the cedar chamber," etc. The rooms are filled with pictures; even the walls of the entries and staircases are covered with them.²

In the library is a large collection of standard and current books. There is fine old mahogany furniture a-plenty, blue-and-

¹ From the date of buying the house Henry Vassall apparently never had any other domicile. Many of the Cambridge Tories regarded the village as a summer resort only, and retired in winter to their fine Boston dwellings. The Colonel's brother William had an especially magnificent estate in the metropolis, and his nephew John was constantly buying new property there. But he himself, either from choice or necessity, made no further purchases, and settled down for life on his compact and handsome possessions in the university town.

² The inventory of 1769 gives a hundred and fifty. "In the best room" were "three family pictures." Two were doubtless those of the Colonel and his wife, already mentioned, and the third that of their daughter Elizabeth. This inventory, it must be remembered, was that of a deceased bankrupt who had run through most of his property, and hence represents only a remnant of the full personal estate. It gives, for instance, only "2 horses, old," where a dozen years before there were ten. See Appendix A. Ninety-one pictures were left in 1778. (Appendix B.)

white china, and an imposing array of plate — over six hundred ounces. There is fine old joinery too, balusters, panels, wainscot, carving. But such evidences of wealth and taste, common to all the more luxurious dwellings of the time, are not particularly characteristic of the place. What most strikes the observer even to-day is its flavor of the native soil — its true “Old Cambridge” air — that so contrasts it with its loftier, newer, more sumptuous and formal neighbor across the road. The latter was built “all of a piece” in 1759 by young John Vassall, son of our Henry’s brother John already mentioned. A tradition of delicious mystery connects the two houses by a secret underground passage. A bricked-up arch in Colonel Henry’s cellar wall appears to be the foundation of both the tradition and that part of the building. We may assume, from what we know of the owner, that the feature was much more probably the entrance to a wine vault. Although this primitive “subway” has caved in under the prodding of modern investigation, the touch of romance indispensable for a historic mansion was supplied, up to living memory, by an absolutely authentic secret recess closed by a sliding panel. Since the “secret” of its location — by the fireplace in one of the oldest rooms — was as usual public property, there was, naturally, nothing in it. Even the appropriate legend which by all the unities should have lingered there has long since slipped away to join the majority of the family traditions in oblivion.

II

Such was the home to which young Harry Vassall brought his bride. For as soon as the place was ready he married, January 28, 1742, Penelope, daughter of the immensely wealthy old Isaac Royall.¹ That magnate, like his wife (Elizabeth Eliot²), was

¹ For a full account of this family see Harris, “The New England Royalls,” *N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register*, xxxix, 348.

² She was a daughter of Asaph Eliot of Boston. By a previous marriage with John Brown of Antigua she had had a daughter Ann, who married Robert Oliver of the same island, and became the mother of Thomas and Elizabeth Oliver. The last two married respectively Elizabeth and John Jr., children of John Vassall Sen., brother of Henry Vassall, who married Penelope, daughter of Mrs. Royall by her second husband. The relationships thus established between Royalls, Olivers, and Vassalls, enough to dizzy the most indurated gene-

of good Massachusetts stock, but had spent most of his life on a rich sugar plantation which he had early purchased in Antigua, "in the Popeshead Division,"¹ and from which he derived a princely income. There Penelope was born, September, 1724. Amid the enervating influences of the social life on that little island (just the size of Martha's Vineyard), where rum was cheaper than water,² where sybaritic luxury rubbed elbows with demoralizing primitiveness,³ where the blacks outnumbered their masters almost ten to one, she passed her childhood—much, we may imagine, as her husband had passed his. In 1737 the family returned to Boston (though her brother, young Isaac, had been sent back several years earlier for his schooling),⁴ and she found herself in a very different environment. From that date we have occasional references⁵ to her of a pleasant, homely kind:

alogist, are only typical of those which interwove the whole group of Cambridge Tories into an indistinguishable mass of cousins and "in-laws."

¹ See early maps in Oliver, *History of Antigua*. The location was on the northern shore of the island, near "Royall's Bay."

² "This island is almost destitute of fresh springs . . . only two worthy of notice, therefore the water principally used is rain. . . . In dry seasons, an article of such vast consumption must necessarily be scarce and dear; I have been informed that rum and wine have been given in exchange for it." Luffman, *Brief Account of Antigua*, 61.

³ "The tables of the opulent, and also of many who can very ill afford it, are covered with a profusion known only in this part of the world; their attendants numerous, but it is not uncommon to see them waiting almost destitute of clothing, and the little they have mere rags. . . . A few days since, being invited to a tea-drinking party, where was collected from ten to a dozen ladies and gentlemen, a stout negroe fellow waited, who had no other covering than an old pair of trowsers. I believe I was the only person present who took the least notice of the indelicacy of such an appearance, and indeed it is my opinion, were the slaves to go quite naked, it would have no more effect on the feelings of the major part of the inhabitants of this country than what is produced by the sight of a dog or cat." Letter of March 10, 1787. *Idem*.

⁴ Many references to him appear in the accounts of his father's agent in New England. (Middlesex Probate, 19545, O.S.) A particularly interesting item is: "1728 Aug. 31 To cash pd. Pelham for your son's picture £15," with a similar sum a little later. The boy was then scarcely ten years old. The Royalls evidently had a passion for family portraits. Numbers of them are disposed of in the will of young Isaac, and still others are catalogued in Bayley, *John Singleton Copley*. The inventory of 1778 mentions "A large picture of 2 Children, £6" still remaining in the Medford mansion. Cf. note, page 9.

⁵ Middlesex Probate, 19545, Old Series, *supra*.

1738 June 23 Cash to Penelope	20/-
1740 March 4 Ring for Penelope	60/-
Jun 15 Deblois teaching Penelope ¹	£1
Aug. 9 Mr. Stevens Mak ^s Cloggs for Penelope	£5.13

When in 1739 her father died ² she became by his will half owner with her brother of the Antigua plantation, and no small matrimonial prize.³ Whether her wooing by the youthful Jamaica planter, when she was scarcely turned seventeen, was warmed by some adumbration of this pleasing truth, we are left to conjecture. Was it a love match or a *mariage à la mode*?

One fact is indubitable. With the exception of a daughter who died in infancy, the only fruit of the union was Elizabeth, baptized in December of 1742. This solitary representative of the next generation was nurtured with every advantage that solicitude could devise and wealth procure. The scraps of family records give evidence, if evidence were needed, that from infancy she enjoyed the possessions of a princess — fine clothes, jewelry, fairy-books, special furniture, ponies; and when she outgrew the last, a horse was brought for her all the way from Philadelphia. Servitors hovered around her to anticipate her slightest want. Strange fruits and toys came to her from far-away tropical islands. She had the best schooling that the metropolis of New England could give her. Admiring relatives surrounded and petted her; distinguished visitors applauded and rewarded her little displays of cleverness. Her portrait was painted while still a child. Unless human nature has strangely altered of late, we may safely say that from her throne in the nursery she ruled the household.

Yet such a lonely nursery was against all family traditions. Boston and Cambridge, Milton and Braintree, were full of handsome and wealthy young Vassalls. The girls were marrying right

¹ Probably music lessons from Stephen De Blois, organist of King's Chapel.

² Buried by mistake on his estate in Medford, he was hastily dug up again and carted to his summer home at Dorchester, where his marble tomb, prepared almost ten years before, awaited its occupant — foresighted indeed during life, but somewhat unable to control his affairs post obit. Brooks, *History of Medford*, 151.

³ By the will of her mother in 1747 she further became entitled to the income of over £2000 during coverture, and to the principal if she survived her husband. (Middlesex Probate, 19543, O.S., and cf. page 20.) It is to be feared that long before his death, however, he had managed to reach and squander all her property. See page 38 *et seq.*

and left into the first families of the "court circle." Six boys of the name were on the rolls of Harvard during the mid-century. Our Henry, it is true, did not enjoy the advantages of university training, possibly because he arrived here at about the age when boys then were graduated. Apparently in consequence of that lack, he has been carelessly spoken of as uneducated; though the partial list, still preserved,¹ of his handsome library belies the slur.

But the want of a college education was not by any means all that differentiated the subject of the present sketch from the other somewhat conventional members of his generation, or the only reason why, so far as we can now estimate, he stands out from among them a more picturesque and compelling personality. For he possessed qualities not always guaranteed by a college degree. He was eminently a man of affairs, a good organizer, an acute business manager, a leader acknowledged and esteemed both among his own exclusive clique and among the hard-headed, hard-fisted rank and file of his townsmen. Twice did the latter, by electing him their representative in the General Court, evince their appreciation of his political sagacity.² His abilities as a presiding officer made him in considerable demand for "moderator" at town meetings.³ In church affairs he was, as we shall see, the local Episcopalians' spokesman and mainstay.⁴ The trust and confidence reposed in him by his own relatives is shown in his appointment as guardian of the children of his deceased brother Lewis of Braintree.⁵ His military proficiency was notable enough to bring him in 1763 the not unimportant commission of lieutenant colonel in the First Regiment of Middlesex Militia, commanded by his still more versatile neighbor,

¹ See Appendix A.

² 1752 and 1756. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 461. This was during a brief period in which the town tried the experiment of paying no salaries to its representatives, so that a man of wealth and leisure was almost a necessity for the position. (*Idem*, 133.) It must be admitted that a perusal of the House journals for these years does not reveal any startling official activities of the Hon. H. Vassall. Memberships on ornamental committees and similar complimentary appointments are most commonly associated with his name.

³ Cambridge Town Records, MSS., *passim*.

⁴ See page 43.

⁵ See page 25.

William Brattle.¹ If the citizen soldiers of his day were anything like those of the present, his appointment implies no small degree of popularity, adaptability, and skill in handling men. Though at that date there was no chance for active service, we can easily picture the dashing figure he must have made at the annual Cambridge "trainings."²

Socially, above all, his family connections, lavish expenditures, and ample hospitality gave him especial prominence. He was long looked-to to do the honors of the town on any notable occasion.

¹ Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 407. He is thus remembered as Colonel Henry, to distinguish him from the other Henry, the son of his brother William. His successor in the command was his popular friend, Thomas Oliver.

² An almost photographic account of one of these inspiring occasions has been left by the Rev. Winwood Serjeant, the Colonel's (second) rector at Christ Church, whose house adjoined the common. Supplying the context on one margin, which has been torn off, it is as follows:

"Yesterday the Honble Brigadier Genl made an elegant Entertainment for the Governor, Council, & a number of other Gentlemen: After [dinner]; being the grand muster Day for training, the several com[panies] of militia were ordered to attend: & a sham fight exhibited [between] the English & French: The English marching through Cambridge [w]ere smartly attacked by an ambuscade of the French who were [posted] behind Roe's, the Blacksmith's shop, near Col. Vafsal. The noble [Brigadier] vigorously repulsed the Enemy, forced his pafsage thro' the street, sword [in hand] & obliged the French Army to retreat to a strong Fort deeply intrenched [at the e]rner of the Common to the nor'ward of our house; After the Genl [had colle]cted his forces together upon the Common, he called a Council of [war & it] was soon determined to attack the Fort as his men were in [high spir]its after the late advantage: they advanced with great resolution: Victory was for some time dubious: but by the afsistance of [a brisk f]ire from the artillery advantageously posted on the right wing, [the eloquence of the Officers, & the never failing courage of English [troops t]hey at last forced the Intrenchments, & obliged the Enemy to capitulate: they quitted the fort to the English, & marched thro. the Army with colours flying & Drums beating: the English then entered, demolished the outworks & set fire to the fort, a parcel of shavings laid there for that purpose: Thus ended the famous Battle of Cambridge to the great honour of Genl Brattle, his officers & men: & to the admiration of a large concourse of people: My House as full of Ladies as it could hold: Cost me a great deal of Tea, bread & butter & wine. I make no doubt you will have a pompous account of this Battle in the publick papers. What will make it more remarkable in future History is that no body was killed or wounded excepting one private man belonging to the Artillery who had a pretty large cartrage of powder for the Cannon in his pocket which accidentally took fire, & burnt his cloths a good deal, but was much more frightened than hurt." Serjeant to Mrs. Browne, Cambridge, October 7, 1772. MSS. in possession of the Rev. Arthur Browne Livermore.

When, for example, the Hon. William Shirley passed through Cambridge on his way to assume the reins of his Majesty's government at Boston, he broke the last stage of his journey "at the seat of Col. VASSALL, at Cambridge, where he lodg'd that Night" and "was waited upon by a Number of Gentlemen from whom he received the Compliments of Congratulation."¹ He figured also in ceremonies of a more solemn sort. The diary of his contemporary, John Rowe, records:

1766, Sep. 12, Fryday. in Afternoon I went to the Funeral of My Old Friend Sam^l Wentworth. his Bearers were. Old M^r Benj^a Faneuill Colo Henry Vassall M^r Jos Lee M^r W^m Sheaff M^r Richard Clark and M^r Tho^s Brinly.²

As to the more intimate family life in that noted "seat," especially in the earlier years, the annalist is supplied with scanty information. One familiar figure in the experience of every young couple is not entirely obscured — the mother-in-law. With the Vassalls her relations seem to have been affectionate and appreciative. According to Mr. William Fessenden, Jr.,

Being at the House of M^r. Henry Vassall in Cambridge some time in the Fall of the Year 1745 I there saw an ancient Lady, who, (as I was then informed) was Mrs. Vassal's Mother. She asked me if I knew her son Isaac I replied I did know him, and that we went to the School in Cambridge at one and the same Time. She farther asked me if I had heard any Thing about Him that Day, I told [her] I had not she seemed to me to be full of Concern about Him, for as I understood by Her, Her Son was not well She after this proceeded in Her Discourse, according to [the] best of my Remembrance as follows viz. I am come to tarry with my Daughter Penne (as she called M^{rs}. Vassal) till Mr. Vassal's return I sometimes visit at one Child's and then at Another's But my Son's I call my Home She further said She hoped M^r Vassal would not make a long tarry for she wanted to go home — She also said Her Children were all y^e Comfort she had left and that they were all kind and Tender to Her.³

¹ *Boston Newsletter*, August 12, 1756. The event was handled with such matter-of-course ease that not a ripple of its excitement is reflected in the household accounts for the day.

² MS. at Mass. Hist. Society. The concourse at Vassall's own funeral bore final witness to his standing in the community. See page 44.

³ Affidavit in No. 129879, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judi-

For her son Isaac, on the other hand, her apparent solicitude proved sadly deceptive. When she died, in April of 1747, she left a long and complicated will, amidst all the involutions of which one painful fact was only too clear — Isaac had been omitted altogether. Her only immediate bequests were a thousand pounds to each of her three granddaughters and namesakes, Elizabeth Oliver, Elizabeth Royall, and Elizabeth Vassall. The gift to the last was "now lying in debts owing to me from her father Henry Vassall, on two bonds," of 1744, "both to remain in the hands of the executor until paid." The residue — the estate was all in bonds totalling almost £8000 — after a long trust term was to be divided between her daughters Ann Oliver and Penelope Vassall, for their own private and separate uses.

Thereupon Isaac Royall, having divided with Henry Vassall all the personalty in which Madame Royall had only a life interest, entered into a solemn compact with him and Robert Oliver, father of Elizabeth Oliver, to break the will. But when the appeal was finally carried up to the Governor and Council, Henry Vassall's name was not on the papers. Whether this was due to his absence, or to some quarrel he had had with his fellow suitors, or to his own good business sense, we cannot say. At all events the appeal was dismissed, and the Vassalls were free to receive their appointed shares, undiminished either by contributions to the neglected Isaac (who was already rich enough in all conscience) or by costs of an expensive suit.¹

Reminiscent mutterings of this family tempest evidently persisted for years, especially in the matter of the Antigua plantation. This, for some time after his marriage, Henry Vassall worked, in the right of his wife, as joint tenant with its other owner, Isaac Royall. Though both were extremely young for such responsibilities, their operations were so successful that early in 1747 they extended them by leasing a nearby tract of one hundred and forty-eight acres from Robert Oliver.² The next year, however, they recorded an agreement to hold "sundry

cial Court, Boston. Mr. Vassall's absence here implied was doubtless due to one of his trips to the West Indies.

¹ Middlesex Probate, 19543, O.S., and Case No. 129879, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

² Oliver, *History of Antigua*, ii, 348.

negroes and horned cattle and horses, which they have jointly purchased since 1739, and put upon a certain plantation," no longer as joint tenants, but as tenants in common, "so that no right of survivorship be between them."¹ This may have been the outcome of what Royall refers to as "a Dispute between Mr. Vassall and myself in Antigua when he was on y^e spot & I stade heir [*here*] waiting for y^e event of our Scheme [to supersede Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire] which was a greater damage to me than y^e former [loss on sugar]." ²

The new arrangement made little practical difference, and the Colonel, who seems to have been the active partner throughout, continued his production of sugar and rum³ so assiduously that his brother-in-law became jealous, accused him of monopolizing the plant, and brought suit "for the use and hire of the Windmill, Boiling House, Cureing House, Still house and other the Sugar Works erected and then being upon eight Acres and three quarters of Land of the s^d Isaac's lying in the Division of Pope's head so called, in Antigua aforesd."

Again, however, the Colonel's business cleverness proved more than a match for his slow-witted associate, and thanks to a proviso he had inserted in their agreement, he obtained a verdict in his favor with costs, both in the lower court and on appeal. Thereupon the exasperated Royall actually brought a writ of review, but suffered the same fate a third time.⁴ It is easy to conclude that this fresh wrangle paved the way for the partition of the whole estate a few years later, as will appear.

Of Henry Vassall's daily life when at Cambridge, the most extended and illuminating details are to be gathered from a

¹ Middlesex Deeds, 47/338. Vassall was then apparently in Antigua, as his signature had to be sworn to in Boston by one of the witnesses.

² Royall to Waldron, Charlestown, January 15, 1749/50. *New Hampshire Provincial Papers*, vi, 67. We have here a perfect cameo of the two men — Royall easy-going and gullible, losing money by inaction; Vassall energetic, perhaps rather quarrelsome, but carrying his point.

³ Cf. Affidavit of Stephen Greenleaf in the appeal on Mrs. Royall's will; that she worked for her many years, and "whenever he carried in his accots she asked him what he would drink: he told her some of Mr Isaac Royalls Double Still'd Rum And accordingly she sent for it & had it & gave it him and further Deponent Saith not."

⁴ No. 68209, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

little expense book kept by him during the years 1755-1759.¹ As this volume is the only known original source of information on our subject, it may bear somewhat extended quotation. The entries, from interior evidence, appear to be in "old tenor," a depreciated currency then fast disappearing, which passed for "lawful money" at the rate of seven and a half for one, — lawful money, the standard of value in New England, being in turn worth only three-quarters of sterling.²

The high cost of living first claims our attention. A load of wood was worth £2:10, of hay £7:7:6, a thousand of lath £3, "20 locust posts" £9, 53½ bushels of oats £26:15:6, 8 lbs. wax candles £7:10, a yoke of oxen £130, a hog £16, two shoats £9:18, the freight of a horse from Philadelphia £8:5, and "six boat loads of Mud [? manure] £24." For the table, butter was 4/6 the pound, "a loaf of Single refin'd sugar" £3:5:10, "fish" £6 per quintal, geese 18/ each, numberless barrels of cider 70/ a barrel, and Lisbon wine £50 per cask. Pork and Indian-meal, the staples of Colonial diet, figure steadily of course on the *ménu*; but there are plenty of more appetizing items: oysters, herrings, "mackarell," salmon, sausages, cheese, almonds, pears, radishes, "spinnach," turnips, "garlix," pease, white beans, "biscuet," ducks, chickens, turkeys, fowls, "colebrands," quails, teal, pigeons, beef, calveshead, rabbits, lamb, veal, venison, and quantities of "lemmons," honey, and "chocolat."

For personal use we find sundry pairs of "Lemonee handkerchiefs" at £24 a pair,

"a Wigg, £12 "

"Earing [*sic*]³ for Betsey £2:5 "

"a Hatt, £14 "

"pocket compass & silver pen £12:7:6 "

"Desk for Betsey £35 "

¹ Loaned to the Cambridge Historical Society in 1914 by Mrs. Oliver McCowen. (See note, page 8.) It is 4½ by 7 inches, bound in limp marbled-paper covers, and contains toward the back a number of blank pages. "Henry Vassall 1753" is writ large on the fly-leaf, but the first entries are of the journey of 1755. See page 26.

² The net result of all which is that the prices here given are just ten times their equivalents in sterling.

³ Cf. "Gold wires for ears" of John Vassall's daughter Lucy, aged twelve. *Guardian's Accounts*, Middlesex Probate, 23339, Old Series.

1758 Septemb ^r		brought over		8535	122 ¹ / ₂
1 st	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Spear for plaving Stones			13.	10.
2 nd	John Pierce £. to Cash p ^d . him in part of my note dated Jan ^y 24 th 1757			128.	
	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Sundrys by Toney			15.	5.
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			5.	3.
5 th	John Pierce £. to Cash p ^d . him in full of my note			52.	
	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Sundrys			1.	17. 6
6 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Caleb Prentice in full as p ^d . Lect			18.	
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			9.	
	Lewis Vassall £. to Cash p ^d . Caleb Prentice p ^d . Lect			185.	1. 2
7 th	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Mokes Richard for 600 th ^{in full}			46.	17. 7
	Land Grant £. to Cash p ^d . him in full as p ^d . Lect.			49.	10.
	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Sundrys			4.	4.
8 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Meal &c			7.	4.
9 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			6.	
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . bridge in full as p ^d . Lect			47.	— 6
	Abraham Hasey £. to Cash p ^d . him			3.	15.
12 th	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . Sundrys			3.	18.
13 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			13.	5.
15 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . W. Lloyd for Landes in full p ^d . Lect.			53.	
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			7.	
16 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			3.	13.
18 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . wood £6. 15/ Sundry £1. 8/			8.	3.
	Enoch Parker £. to Cash p ^d . him on acc ^t . wood p ^d . Lect.			75.	
19 th	Expences £. to Cash p ^d . warp candles 8			7.	10.
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Henry Prentice alias touch			10.	2. 1
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			4.	19.
20 th	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Mr. Champney			10.	— 8
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			8.	— 3
21 st	£. to £. to £. p ^d . wood			1.	18.
	£. to £. to £. p ^d . Sundrys			10.	2. 1
Carried over				£9325	0. 0 ¹ / ₂

- "cork Shoes £6 "
- "stays for Eliz. Vassall £25 " [She was sixteen!]
- "stays for P[enelope]. V[assall]. £37 "
- "gave Betsey to buy a Gown £40 "
- "Elizth Vassall to buy a Quilt £25 "
- "cash pd. fustian for her £4:10 "
- "Mending watches £2:10 "
- "watch Chain &c £2:5 "
- "tape & Camomile flowers £1:16 "
- "Leather Breeches for Abraham Hasey £12:15 "

and several rather unexpected charges for "weaving cotton and linen at the Manufactory." Entries like the above, we must remember, were only the small local expenditures. Frequent references to "imposts of goods from London" show where the more important purchases were made.

An idea of the demands upon the purse of a prominent man is given:

- 1756 March 18th pd. Howe for my rates in full £31:7:10
- April 26th pd. Tappin, ministerial rates £13:8:3
- Hasey's Ditto £3:4:3
- August 20th pd. Craddock my Subscription to Dipper [the organist at King's Chapel] £10:10
- Nov. Sam'l Whittemore, one third of my subscription to y^e [Cambridge] meeting house £50
- Marratt for y^e Parson's chaize £4:10
- 1757 Jan. 12th pd. S. Palmer for my taxes £38:10:11
- Sept. 17th. S. Whittemore being in full of my subscription to the meeting house in Cambridge £100
- 1758 Feb. 3d. Prentice for taxes £55:19:0
- pd. Sheaffe my Subscription to rice [?] £10
- Cash pd at Charitable Society ¹ £10:15:6
- Ministerial taxes £17:5:0
- Tickets for Concert £11:5
- p^d 10 tickets Boston Lottery Clafs N^o 6 £45
- Henry Prentice alias touch £10:2:1
- [an early use of the slang term]
- Prentice, touch in full £10:10

¹ Cf. John Rowe's *Diary*, October 4, 1764. "Spent the eveng at the Charitable Society gave away Charity about twenty dollars."

Dec. 25th. pd. at Trinity Church £19:10:0

given E[lizabeth] O[liver] & E. V. £3:13

1759 April at Charitable Society £17:17:6

Besides the slaves, of whom anon,¹ various workpeople and local tradesmen move in and out among these pages, — “Griggs y^e Gardner,” “Gamage y^e Cooper,” “Nancy y^e manteau maker,” “Welch, Glazier,” “Dutch Betty,” “Curtis the Wheelwright,” and so on.² Abraham Hasey, the college carpenter,³ stands out most prominently of all. Between him and Henry Vassall there plainly existed some close though unexplained relationship. For the support of this humble artisan (and his wife) the gilded man-about-town enters constant expenditures, covering food, drink, clothing, rates, taxes, and pocket money. Even his father-in-law, Samuel Felch the tailor, was remembered. Payments are also made to

“Jenkins for paper hangings”

“Colpee for washing”

“Mrs. Phillips for nursing”

“Isaac Stearns for cyder”

¹ See page 61 *et seq.*

² Another rather famous retainer was “Miss Molly Hancock, whom, as old Molly, we recollect in our early days. She had been employed by the court circle, and her admiration of the Vassalls and others of those old-style gentry remained unchanged by time. Her expression was, ‘You could worship the ground they trod on.’ The past was enough for her, she did not desire to be reconciled to the present. Her small old cottage stood on Garden Street, a short distance from the northeast corner of Appian Way.” John Holmes, “Harvard Square,” *Harvard Book*, ii, 44. Cf. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 573.

³ Faculty Records, 1762 *et seq.* Abraham Hasey married, January 17, 1739–40, Jemima, daughter of Samuel Felch of Reading, who had recently come to Cambridge. She was born in the former town January 21, 1718. Hasey owned a small piece of property on the Watertown road, adjoining John Vassall, and was taxed 1/9 for it in 1770. After the death of his benefactor, however, he had to realize on it. See Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 542. Harris, *Vassalls of New England*, 18. *Felch Family History*, pt. ii, ch. vii. Middlesex Deeds, *passim*. Cambridge Court Records, 1742–48. Mass. Archives, 130/430.

Isaac Hasey, undoubtedly his son, enjoyed, probably through the kindness of Henry Vassall, the college education (class of 1762) which the Colonel himself never had the advantage of. His lowly social position is shown by his “placing” in the class, the last among fifty-one. Nevertheless the boy had good stuff in him, and after “proceeding A.M.” became the first minister of Lebanon, Maine. *N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register*, xiv, 90. *Harvard Graduates’ Magazine*, xxv, 190.

"Jno. Walland for a wigg for Hasey"
 "Mrs. Stearnes for her trouble"
 "cash to pay y^e pedlar"
 "Welch for mending windows"
 "y^e Tinker for mending sundrys"
 "Dedham Girl for Onions"
 "Robeshaw's¹ daughter for washing"
 "Crawford on acct. paving"
 "Mrs. Sables for nursing"²

There is, besides, a long account with the famous Judah Monis, who varied his teaching of Hebrew at college by keeping a hard-ware emporium.

Though the Colonel had no son of his own, a similar responsibility, as has been mentioned, fell to him in 1757, when his deceased brother Lewis's children, Anna, aged eighteen, and Lewis, aged sixteen, nominated for their guardian their "Honored Uncle Henry Vassall, of Cambridge, Esquire." They came from the Braintree side of the family. Since their father's death (and doubtless before it) they had been educated and maintained "by the net proceeds of sugar and molasses received from Sayers & Gale, George Ruggles and others, at Jamaica."³ Lewis Vassall was already in Harvard College,⁴ as a member of the class of 1760, wherein he was "placed" according to social precedence as number five on a list of twenty-seven.⁵ The accounts give an

¹ Cf. Christ Church Building Accounts: "1761 Augt p^d Robishew digging the cellar & 13 days work @ Accot £16.—8." Louis Robicheau was one of the Arcadian exiles or "French neutrals" billeted on Cambridge in 1755.

² The number of entries for nursing, at a period when Miss Elizabeth was well out of her infancy, somehow suggests that Mrs. Vassall was more or less of an invalid.

³ Suffolk Probate, 57/309. See Harris, *Vassalls of New England*.

⁴ Owing to the inadequate dormitory accommodations he was "bording" at Mary Minot's, with his sister Nancy. Betsy Vassall (then aged fifteen) was also "bording" — probably at school in Boston — at George Craddock's.

⁵ It is interesting to note that number one was Thomas Brattle. Nearly a year was consumed in collecting and weighing the data for the "placing" of each class, the final arbitrament not being announced until March or April after the freshmen had entered. The anxious punctilio with which the duty was done may be gathered from the following entry in the Faculty Records: "15 April 1760. At this Meeting also Noyes's Place in his Clafs was consider'd & as his Father is a Justice of the Peace wch we did not know when the Clafs was plac'd, it was agreed the Place assigned him [No.

excellent idea of the outlays for a pretty young gentleman in the best society of his day:

Letter of Guardianship for Lewis & Ann Vassall £4:10

[December 2, 1757]

Lewis to buy books £4:10

Subscription to Lovell [probably the master of the Boston Latin School] £11:5:0

Lewis Vassall, cash p^d him to buy cyder & for pocket expenses £6:15:0

Lewis Vassall, cash for Entrance [fee] for Dancing [school] ¹
90/- for Ent: for fencing 100/- for him to buy Corks
£2:5:0

Lewis Vassall, to buy a horace & for Pocket Expenses £8:5

Lewis Vassall, pair of pumps for him £3:5:0

Lewis Vassall, Cash pd. Mefrs Gould for Holland & Cambridge for his Shirts, £56:17:6

This little book, moreover, opens out a horizon wider than that of Cambridge, or even of Boston. (To reach the latter, by the way, there are various entries of "ferriage," showing that even the possessors of chariots did not always care for the villainous eight-mile road to the metropolis.) Henry Vassall travelled extensively. Sometimes the trips were short, as in May, 1759, a "journey to Plymouth £14:10." In October of 1756 we find the "Expenses of Journey at, to & from Rhode Island £36," and a similar entry just a year later.² In March and April of 1755 — the earliest entries in the book — are the road-house charges of

16] was too low, & after the Matter was debated it was voted that his Place shou'd be between Henshaw & Angier [i.e., No. 8]."

¹ Cf. the guardianship accounts for Lucy Vassall, daughter of John Jr.: "1758 June 19 Pd. Entrance at Dancing School 12/- . . . Dec. 9 Ephraim Turner ¼ years Dancing 16/-" (Middlesex Probate, 23339, Old Series.) Such social advantages were then as now sought in Boston, though it is doubtful if the Harvard undergraduates frequented them as largely as at present. Some years later, in 1766, the Corporation Records mention that "a dancing school hath lately been open'd in Cambridge & divers Scholars of this Houfe have attended it, without Leave from the Government of the College," a condition of things that was adjudged "of bad Consequence," so that the "Disapprobation" of the president and fellows was to be signified to the selectmen, — after which, it is to be supposed, the local cult of Terpsichore languished.

² Probably business trips, Newport being the New York City of Colonial commerce.

a trip, probably made on horseback, through Greenwich, Charles-town, "Stoneington," and Groton to New London, where the rider "pd y^e N. London Pilot £27" and evidently crossed the Sound. Then "p^d at y^e fire place on Long Island at Miller's £14:10," and on through "S. Hampton," "river head," "[Mr.] Blidenburgh¹ at Smith town," Hampstead, Jamaica, "Flatt bush," "ye Narrows," "Statten Island," "Elizth town," Brunswick, "Prince town," and "Trentown" to Bristol. The trip, to this point (where the record ceases), took eleven days.

His business interests in the West Indies carried him even farther afield. As has been said, his wife's plantation at Antigua necessitated trips to that island at frequent intervals. One such voyage was made in 1763.² Again on May 19, 1765, John Rowe notes: "Col. Henry Vassall sailed this afternoon in Capt. Phillips for Antigua."³ His own Jamaica property, too, demanded personal attention. Though he early sold some of his estates there, he long managed to extract a good deal of revenue from that locality.⁴ One of his journeys thither crops up somewhat oddly among the records of the college with which he had no real affiliations. At a meeting of the president and fellows, December 14, 1756:

Vassall, senr⁵ (A senior sophister) having some considerable Difficulties, about the Rents of his Estate at Jamaica & desiring Leave to go thither to look after Them, His Guardian also the Lieut.

¹ I am informed that the name of Blidenburgh is still honorably represented at Smithtown. A little cluster of houses at a landing on the extreme eastern tip of Long Island is still known as Fire Place.

² See page 36. On this visit we catch sight of him attending the auction sale of the "furniture &c of John Watkins Esq. Mr in Chancery deed" and bidding in "A Mahogany shaving stand £4.18.0" while his friend Thomas Oliver went the whole figure and spent £900 on slaves, silver, and pictures. Antigua records for 1763, communicated by Vere L. Oliver, Esq.

³ *Diary*, 82. Concerning this voyage see page 40.

⁴ From entries in the back of the little account book it appears that in 1758 he received a single remittance from George Ruggles of £1000 sterling "on Acc't of J. V's Estate" and another of £100 "on Acc't of Top Hill Estate." Cf. the statement of his brother William after the Revolution: "I spent £50,000 stg. in the United States, every farthing of which I received from my Jamaica estate." *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collections, Temple Papers*, ii, 105.

⁵ I.e., John Vassall, '57, thus distinguished because Lewis Vassall, '60, had just entered college.

Governr, [Spencer Phips] backing thofe his Desires, the sd Affair now came under our Consideration.

Inasmuch then, as the s^d Vafsall's Uncle, Coll^o Vafsall of this Town, is going to Jamaica & will take him under his Care, & also endeavour to assist Him in the Businefs he goes upon, It was now Voted, That the s^d Vafsall be allow'd to proceed on a Voyage to Jamaica, for the Ends affores^d. But that he have not Liberty, to be absent from the College more than four Months, but that He be here to attend his Businefs at the College, on or before the first Day of May next.¹

Yet why drag in business interests when one speaks of the Cambridge Loyalists? The serious affairs that obviously must have engaged some portion of their time and energy are invariably obscured in popular fancy by the more picturesque side of their life, that alone seems to be remembered to-day. For good or ill we always envisage them, as it were, through the golden, lilac-scented haze of a perpetual June. Hardly had they fled from their lovely villas before a new arrival in one of them, echoing the envious gossip she heard around her, began the tradition by writing that "the owners had been in the habit of assembling every afternoon in one or another of these houses and of diverting themselves with music or dancing, and lived in affluence, in good humor and without care."² That they

¹ "College Book No. 7," Harvard Corporation Records. It is to be observed that such an absence from college was plainly a very serious matter, granted only by the highest authority of the University, and under pressure from the most influential sources, to a student whose wealth and position entitled him to be "placed" second in his class.

This voyage to Jamaica explains a hiatus in the little account book from February 11 to September 15, 1757.

² *Letters of Madame Riedesel*, 195. This, the stock quotation when speaking of the Cambridge Loyalists, has probably done more than any other to settle their reputation with the sons of the Puritans. The pride which these urbane gentry took in their "good humour" is as curious as the disfavor with which the rest of the community regarded it. Their rector plumed himself on the fact that "the people of our communion are generally frank, open, sincere . . . their actions are social, generous and free. There is likewise among them a politeness and elegance which to a censorious eye may look worldly and voluptuous." (Apthorp, *A Review*, etc., 50.) To the eye of the redoubtable Jonathan Mayhew the Church of England men appeared "often exceedingly loose, profligate, vain and censorious," and their clergy disgraced themselves by "a pretty gay, debonair and jovial countenance." *Observations*, etc., 74.

managed to extract far more pleasure out of existence than their more serious-minded neighbors is indisputable. "Notwithstanding plays and such like diversions do not obtain here," wrote a visitor to Boston about the time of Henry Vassall's marriage, "they don't seem to be dispirited nor moped for want of them; for both the ladies and gentlemen dress and appear as gay, in common, as courtiers in England on a coronation or birthday. And the ladies here visit, drink tea, and indulge every little piece of gentility to the height of the mode, and neglect the affairs of their families with as good grace as the finest ladies in London."¹ A favorite form of recreation was *al fresco* entertainments, or in winter convivial indoor parties, at the famous hostelrys scattered through the beautiful country about Boston. The account book gives sundry hints of such excursions:

- 1756 April 22nd. p^d y^e reckn^g at Larnards £20.11.4
 May 10th. p^d M^{rs} Coolidge tavern keepers wife in full £2.10
 August 6th. Expences at the Castle &c. £2.17.6
 Sep. 21 fishing lines & hooks £1.7
 1757 Dec. 20th. p^d at Gravons ² £4.15
 Dec. 23d Sundrys at Smiths £4.10
 1758 May 13th Expences at Dracut £17.5
 June 29th p^d at Natick £4.10
 1759 Apr. 6 Cash p^d at Watertown £8.

The Colonel's friend, John Rowe, in his *Diary* a few years later, gives notes of a more extended and social nature. Thus:

1766 Sep. 23 I went to Fresh Pond & din'd there on Turtle with Henry Vassall & wife & (a large company)

A frequent member of these gatherings, and a close intimate of the family, was a certain ill-defined cosmopolite, one Michael Trollett, a French Swiss, last hailing from Dutch Guiana, rich

¹ Bennett, "History of New England," (1740) *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings*, 1860, 125. The same conditions were noted by a guest of the Colonel's ten years later: "The People of Boston dress very genteel & In my Opinion both men & Women are too Expensive in that respect." *Some Cursory Remarks made by James Birket, etc. 1750.*

² John Groaton kept "The Greyhound" at Roxbury. Coolidge's tavern was at "Watertown Bridge." See Pierce's delightful essay on the amusements of Colonial Boston in his introduction to *Letters and Diary of John Rowe*. For Smith's at Watertown see page 31.

and gouty, trying in vain to get a scapegrace son through Harvard, and finally disappearing in the direction of Lancaster.¹

¹ "Michael Trollet Esqr Native of Geneva of French Extract decess'd Sunday Morning July 17th. 1774." (Nourse, *Lancaster Register*, 160.) He is almost always mentioned in connection with Henry Vassall; Rowe notes with surprise, "1765, Feb. 16, Went to see Mr. Trollet who I found alone." He owned no real estate in Cambridge, although his personal taxes were almost as high as Vassall's in 1770. (Mass. Archives, 130/430, where the name is entered as "Truelatt.") He had the gout as early as 1759, and gradually attained some celebrity as a martyr in the cause of high living. "Gouty Trollet is going to Live at Lancaster," wrote the second rector of Christ Church, Winwood Serjeant, to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Browne, October 7, 1772.

His son, Michael James Trollett, entered Harvard from "Surrinam," at the age of sixteen in 1759, ranking socially number 18 out of 42. His hectic career may be traced in the Faculty Records. In March, 1760, he was fined 6/3 for five days' absence, and in April, 2/6 for two days. In June he was away "a Week and 5 Daies," and was mulcted 16/3. In July, "Agreed also that Trollett be punishd with a pecuniary Mulet for going out of Town without Leave five several Times according to the College Law provided in That Case viz Twelve Shillings & 6d @ 2/6 $\frac{2}{3}$ Time. That Trollet also for two very great Crimes, One for refusing more than once to come to his Tutr when sent for. The other, For greatly neglecting his College Exercises notwithstanding the pecuniary Mulets inflicted by his Tutr: be punish'd as ye College law in case directs viz by Degradation. viz. Ten places in his Clafs and that henceforth he take his place between Putnam junr & Senr Furthermore wth Respect to Trollett. Collo Brattle having made complaint to us, That the sd Trollet grosly insulted his train'd Compa wh under Arms, by firing a Squib or Serpent among their firelocks when loaded & primed & all grounded, wrby he great[ly] endangered the limbs @ least of the Souldiers & Spectators; yet he (Collo Brattle) having said, That he wou'd not desire the said Trollett shou'd be animadverted upon by us; Provided he wou'd give Satisfaction to him for that his Offense, Therefore agreed, that before we consider that his Affair, He (Trollet) shou'd have Time & Opportunity given him wherein to endeavr to make the sd Collo Brattle a proper Satisfaction. The Presd't read to Trollet the above vote referring to Collo Brattle immediately after this Meeting.—The above Vote with respect to Trollett's degradation was executed in the Chapel July 9 immediately after Morning Prayer." In September, "Voted That Palmer . . . & Trollet, be punish'd one shilling & 6d each, for making tumultuous & indecent noises, in the College . . . that they be all of ym sent for before us (excepting Trollet who was not in Town, & whose punishmt must therefore be deferr'd to some other Time) . . ." In October, "That Hill senr & Trollett be punish'd one Shilling & 6d Each for making tumultuous & indecent Noises in the College. And that for an Jnsult made upon Mr. Thayer one of the Tutrs of this House, They both be publicly admonish'd & Degraded, viz. Hill fourteen Places in his Clafs & take his Place henceforth between, Adams and Hunts present Place. And that Trollet be degraded to the lowest place in his Clafs.—The above Vote executed Oct. 8 immediately after morning Prayers." The

Rowe records, for instance:

1766 Sep. 18 I went to Mr. Smith's Farm at Watertown Mr Fessendens Brother & dined there with Mr James Smith & wife Mr Murray & wife, Two Mrs Belchers Mr Inman, Mr Walter Colo Henry Vassall & wife Mr Trollet, Mrs Cutler¹ Mr J. Amiel & wife & Miss Chrissy, Cap^t Buntin & Two French Gentlemen from Guadalope.

1767 June 8. Called on Henry Vassall & Mr Trollet, spent an hour with them & then Cap^t Ingram & I went to Freshpond a fishng. . . .

These whiffs of a foreign *entourage* are very characteristic of the atmosphere which envelops the Vassalls in a semi-romantic glamour. Passing and repassing, with a freedom unknown to-day, between the languorous luxury of their southern islands and the prosaic austerity of their northern surroundings, they not unnaturally chose their cronies from among the ingratiating *noblesse* of the Caribbean, the swarthy grandees of the Spanish Main, who through business or pleasure alternated as their hosts on the enchanted shores of the Antilles and their guests in sedate Massachusetts.² For the New England gentry, even in the best

Quarter Bill Book for this period shows that Trollet's fines, beginning with 1/6 in the first quarter of 1759, mounted to the shocking sum of £2.6.9 by the fourth—far the largest of the whole college. In the third quarter of his sophomore year he abruptly disappears, and the Faculty Records contain the final note: "Memo Trollet gave up his Chamber, Novr 7, 1760."

¹ Mrs. Anna Cutler figures frequently in the later records of the Vassall household,—at the dinner-table, on pleasure parties, as witness to documents, etc. She was the wife of Captain Ebenezer Cutler, long the Town Clerk of Lincoln. Her daughter Sarah married in 1764 Samuel Hill, a Cambridge carpenter with an unfortunate reputation for shiftlessness. The Cutlers on the other hand, though in reduced circumstances, were of eminent respectability, and were somewhat notable managers; and as Mrs. Cutler was considerably older than Mrs. Vassall it seems likely that she was employed as a sort of upper-housekeeper, or perhaps as duenna for Miss Elizabeth. See Middlesex Probate, 5502 and 5510, Old Series. *Cutler Memorial*, 33. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 585.

² A delicate sub-tropical aroma exhales even now from the wills and inventories of the family and their connections,—a seductive blend of coffee and spice and sugar, slaves and molasses and rum—especially rum. While the bone and sinew of New England were hard at work buying and selling, importing and smuggling these indispensables, the actual producers thereof were lolling in their splendid town and country houses, satisfying themselves with occasional jaunts to oversee their overseers. This West Indian influence on our local records is typically illustrated by the Vassalls. Old Leonard entailed on his son Lewis "my Plantation and Sugarwork in Luana, in the parish of St. Elizabeth's in Jamaica," and devised to his

social life of Boston, the Colonel did not seem to care overmuch. Possibly he did not feel altogether at home among them. Rowe, in those long-drawn lists of guests at dinners, club meetings, and public functions, never mentions him as appearing in town, except semi-occasionally at his brother William's. Around his own mahogany tree, nevertheless, he delighted to gather select coteries, not forgetting the young friends of Miss Elizabeth. *E. g.*

1765, February 12, Wednesday. Went to Cambridge this forenoon & dined at Henry Vassalls with him & Mrs. Vassall Mr Jnman Miss Bettsy Vassall Miss Pen: Winslow The Rev^d Mr Griffiths & Mrs Cutler also Mrs Row & young Edw^d Winslow¹

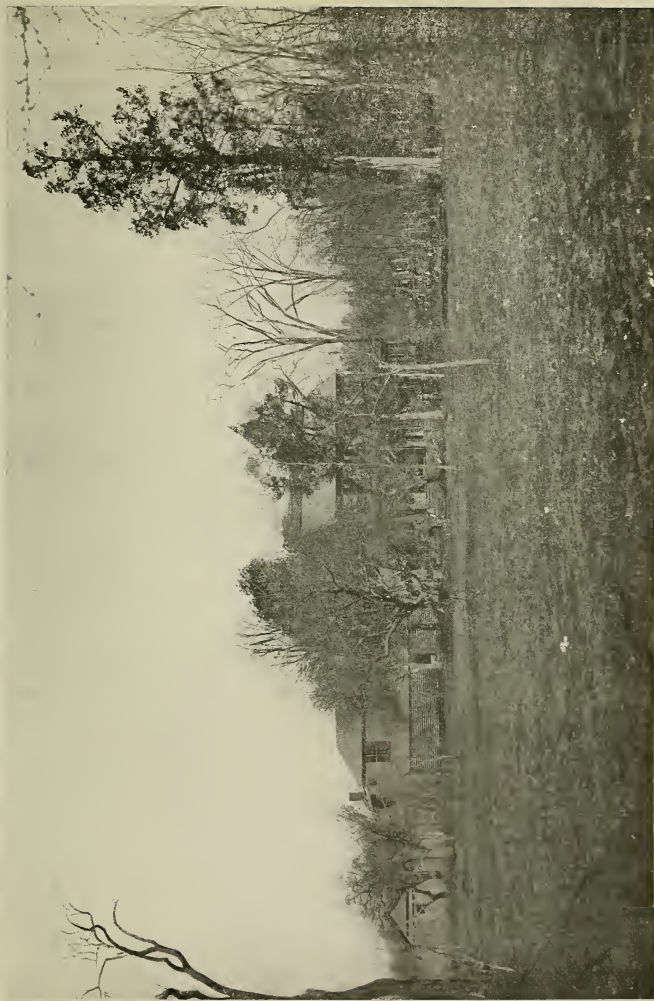
We may thus fancy him engrossed and satisfied with the charmed inner circle of Cambridge, extending his own princely hospitality to relatives, intimates, and distinguished visitors.

Typical, we may be sure, was the welcome accorded to James Birket, a wealthy Antiguan who arrived in Boston during September, 1750, on a tour through New England. Although furnished with letters of introduction to a number of prominent residents, he almost immediately selected the most congenial among them and "went home with H Vassels to Cambridge in his Chariot." At the house he found more guests — "Old Parson Jn^o Chickly² & his wife come from Providence In a Chair 47

son William an interest in another "on Green Island River, near Orange Bay in the Parish of Hannover, at the West end of Jamaica and Joyning the Plantation I have given by Deed unto my Son John" (apparently "on the Barquadier black river in the Island of Jamaica"). John Jr. owned "Newfound River Plantation in Jamaica." A cousin, Florentius Vassall, had "several plantations in the parish of Westmoreland, Jamaica, known as Friendship, Greenwich and Sweet River." Other relatives owned a good part of Barbados. The Royall property in Antigua has been described. The wife of young Isaac Royall inherited "Lands and Plantations called Fairfield lying in Commewine River in the Province of Surinam." Of young John Vassall's sisters, Lucy married John Lavicount, the heir of "Long Lane, Delaps & Windward in St. Peter's Parish, Antigua," while Elizabeth espoused Thomas Oliver from the same island. Henry's sister Susanna married George Ruggles, a wealthy merchant of Jamaica. All these fine gentlemen resided in Cambridge for longer or shorter intervals.

¹ MS. of Rowe's Diary at Mass. Hist. Society. Vassall's well-known hospitality to the clergy was wofully abused by the "Rev. Mr. Griffiths." The fellow had just arrived as successor to East Apthorp in the rectorship of Christ Church, but turned out an arrant impostor and thief named Mieux.

² The indomitable John Checkley, now nearing the end of his pilgrimage, but a notable figure twenty-five years before in the early stages of the great



HENRY VASSALL HOUSE—EAST FRONT

About 1869

Miles." Some ten days were spent in dining, sight-seeing, and excursions, along precisely the same lines still employed by Cambridge hosts:

Sept. 10. Henry Vassels & Self went in his Chace to Dorchester to dine with Cole^o Rob^t Oliver being 9 Miles Returned in the Evening.

11th. We went with a Couple of Country Clergymen, Conducted by Hancock one of the Tutors to See the College at Cambridge . . . After our return from the Colledg dined with H Vassels.

12th. H. Vassels, One Ellerey,¹ Old Chickley And myself Went in 2 Chases to Castle William, which Stands upon an Island in the Bay 3 Miles below Boston and 12 from Cambridge where we dined with the Captain Chaplain &C in the Great Hall

Upon leaving, however, he received an attention which few modern hosts would have either the time or the money to bestow.

18th. Set out for Rhode Island, H. Vassels And his Wife, Mary Phipps The Lieu^t Gov^{es} Daughter wth Two Servants &C To Accompany me So far on my Journey.

Under the tutelage of this pleasant party he spent a week visiting and inspecting Providence and Newport. Finally, with obvious regret, he notes:

24th. This Morning I Accompany'd my good friends Henry Vassals & his Spouse And Mary Phips on their return back as far as Bristol ferry which is 12 Miles where I took leave of 'em.²

Some of the last of the Colonel's entertainments were those connected with the wedding of his daughter Elizabeth in 1768. The lucky man was Dr. Charles Russell of Charlestown.³ After

"Episcopal Controversy." Henry Vassall's churchmanship was of the practical kind that always kept open house for the cloth.

¹ Probably the second husband of Lucy, widow of the Colonel's brother John, now deceased.

² *Some Cursory Remarks made by James Birket in his Voyage to N. America 1750-51.* Concerning Cambridge itself, he observes: "The Town of Cambridge is well Scituated . . . but has no trade (being too Near to Boston) the Inhabitants depends Chiefly on their Courts &C being the Chiefe of a County And the Colledge &C There are Some good homes here and the town is laid out very Regular, but for want of trade One 4th part of it is not built." In an appended list of his letters of introduction he enters "one for Henry Vassals Esqr my true fr'd."

³ "1768, February 17. I paid a visit to Colo. Henry Vassall & Family

graduating from Harvard in 1757 and studying medicine in England and Scotland—a rare privilege in those days—he had set up in practice at Lincoln, on an estate inherited from his uncle, Judge Russell. The bride was one of that fair bevy of patrician maidens whom a later chronicler who loved his “old” Cambridge has described as sympathetically as if he himself had felt their charm. “They blend prettily the courtly elegance which they emulate, with the simplicity of manner that is their provincial birthright. Though conforming to the general habits of New England, they are free from the more rigorous restraints of Puritanism. Their holiday life is to be a short one. We find plenty of beauty, but no familiar countenances in that group. They have left no copies here by which to recognize them. Not many years hence those soft eyes will look westward through exiles’ tears to the home that is to know them no more. Some of those dainty hands must break the bitter bread of dependence, and some prepare the scanty meal of poverty.”¹ Let us hope that the young couple had a merry honeymoon, unshadowed by the fates that were soon to overtake them.

Unfortunately we have reason to believe that these sumptuous festivities in the Vassall house were frequently accompanied by a good deal of dissipation. Gaming for high stakes was a well-known family failing. The Colonel’s brother William was left a handsome estate by his father’s will “upon this special Proviso and Condition, that he go before two Magistrates . . . and solemnly make oath that for the future he will not play any Game whatsoever to the value of 20 s. at any one time.”² His other brother John, who burned himself out at the early age of thirty-four, was described as “giving himself up to pleasure” and “spending his money in pleasures,” both in the new world and the old.³ Only too accurately, it is to be feared, did the facetious Mr. Jabez Fitch, on observing, in 1775, the family crest of the goblet and the sun, deduce that the bearers thereof

where I found Dr Russell who was married to Miss Betty on Monday Last.”
 Jo’ n Rowe, *Diary*.

¹ John Holmes, “Harvard Square,” *Harvard Book*, ii, 41.

² Suffolk Probate, 33/210.

³ Waldron to Royall, Portsmouth, 1747 and 1748. *New Hampshire Prov. Papers*, vi, 43, 45, etc. It is only fair to state, per contra, that the little account book contains no entries that can be identified as losses at play,

were accustomed to drink wine by daylight.¹ Indeed the only "pen picture" that we have of our hero is a sadly unfavorable one. It is attributed to the old family slave Darby, of whom more hereafter.² According to his recollections many years later,

"Col. Henry Vassall was a very wicked man. It was common remark that he was 'the Devil.' He was a gamester and spent a great deal of money in cards and lived at the rate of 'seven years in three,' and managed to run out nearly all his property; so that Old Madam when she came back after the peace was very poor. He was a severe and tart master to his people; and when he was dying and asked his servants to pray for him, they answered that he might pray for himself."³

Biassed and overdrawn as we may hope this description to be — especially as coming from one who declared to his dying day that George Washington himself was "no gentleman"⁴ — yet it certainly receives ample confirmation in one respect. Adroit as he seems to have been in business matters, Henry Vassall's pecuniary position was apparently permanently precarious. His

though there are a few purchases of the lottery tickets that were then so generally patronized.

¹ *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings, 2d Series*, ix, 76. The goblet or vase, *Vas*, surmounted by the sun, *Sol*, formed one of those punning or "canting" devices so much affected by the English heralds whenever the bearer's name could be tortured into such shape. The most conspicuous and arrogant use of the device still remaining is to be seen on the cenotaph of John Vassall, Sr., — the occasion of Fitch's deduction. This, one of the familiar "table-shaped" tombs, displays no inscription whatever except the above emblems. It was to this that O. W. Holmes referred in his *Cambridge Churchyard*:

"Or gaze upon yon pillared stone,
The empty urn of pride;
There stand the Goblet and the Sun —
What need of more beside?
Where lives the memory of the dead
Who made their tomb a toy?
Whose ashes press that nameless bed?
Go, ask the village boy."

The pride in these armorials seems to have been a family characteristic. Thus we find Miss Lucy, daughter of John Jr., at the age of fifteen employing John Gore for "drawing a Coat of Arms," "painting the arms," and "Framing & Glazing Do." (1763-1764). *Middlesex Probate*, 23339, Old Series.

² See page 74 *et seq.*

³ MS. notes by Dr. N. Hoppin circa 1855, in Christ Church papers.

⁴ See page 75.

very start in life was far less generous than that given his brothers. He was only a younger son, and manifestly not a great favorite with his father.¹ When old Leonard died in 1737 it was found that the principal provision made for the lad in the will was the transfer of £3000 Jamaica currency owing to the testator from his other son John. To suggest that this was one reason for Henry's leaving the island and seeking the well-stocked matrimonial market of Boston may be ungallant; but it must be admitted that his courtship of Penelope Royall began shortly after she had become an heiress in her own right. Even this advantageous match did not steer him clear of financial shoals. He began to be in straits for ready money as early as 1744, when, as we have seen, he borrowed £1000 from his mother-in-law, Madame Royall. The next year, like a true man of fashion, he owed Billings Bros., his Boston tailors, no less than £621.19, and became so deeply embarrassed that he sold some of his Jamaica property to his brother John, who as a part of the consideration agreed to discharge the above debt, along (presumably) with many others.

This transaction, we may observe in passing, was the indirect cause of preserving to us the only known first-hand statement of our hero — giving us a glimpse of his mode of life and manner of doing business, as well as of his last sickness. In John's settlement with Billings a question arose as to the allowance to be made for the depreciation of the currency, a bone of contention that our more stable monetary system has happily buried. A long-standing dispute ensued, and finally the executors of the parties, now both deceased, carried the matter to the highest court. Among the papers in the case ² occurs the following:

I Henry Vassall do testify and swear that in the year 1746 I sold an Estate I had in Jamaica to my Brother John Vassall which was to be paid for at different Times and in different Ways, among the Rest he was to discharge a Bond I had given to Messrs. Billings's which he did & delivered to me, how he did it, I then knew not, from which Time I heard nothing of it untill the [year] 1763, when

¹ He was, for instance, the only boy of the family whom the old gentleman did not see fit to send through Harvard College.

² *Vassall v. Billings*, No. 147649, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

a Day or two after my Arrival from Antigua, Mr. Richard Billings & Mr. Ezekiel Goldthwait came to my House and desired to speak with me, accordingly we went into my Garden, when Mr. Billings told me he had Some Difficulty in settling with my Nephew John Vassall and asked me about the settlement of the Bond, whether I could remember if I had allowed Depreciation, I told him all that I remembered was that there was such a Bond but it was so long ago that I did not recollect the Particulars of settling it, but imagined the Bond would shew it, he asked me to let him see the Bond, I told him I could not look for it then, but I should be in Boston in a few Days & that I would look for it & bring it with me, which I accordingly did & shew'd it to Mr. Rich^d Billings who desired me to let him have it to shew Mr. Goldthwait, I told him no, but I should be on Change at one of ye Clock where if Mr. Goldthwait came, he might see it, which he did and I shewed it to him. About a week or Ten Days after my Nephew Jno Vassall came to me and asked me whether I remembered any Thing about allowing Depreciation to his Father on my Bond to the Billings's which his Father settled with them, because he had found among his Father's Papers a note from the Billings's to allow his Father the Depreciation out of the Bond his Father had given them in Case I did not allow it; I told him that it was a great while ago, and that I did not recollect the Transaction, and that Mr. Billings had been with me on the same subject, and that I had told him the same, upon which he desired I would endeavour to recollect the affair, for he said, if his Father had been allowed it, he did not desire it again, but that if his Father had not recd. it, it was but just they should allow it, Upon which I promised him I would endeavour to recollect the settlement of the affair and which accordingly I endeavoured to do, when after a good while considering & recollecting several Circumstances, it brought the whole Transaction to my mind, which is as follows: my Brother John came to my House & taking out the Bond from his Pocket, says, Harry, here is your Bond to the Billings's which they have assigned over to me with Depreciation which you may allow or not, it is nothing to me, I told him I should allow no Depreciation, upon which he said he would not if he was in my Place, accordingly I took a Receipt of him in full on the Back of the Bond and allowed him in the settlement for the amount of the Bond with its Interest as so much recd. in part pay for the Purchase he had made of me without allowing Depreciation then or since.

HENRY VASSALL

Cambridge March 24th, 1768.

Middlesex ss: March 24th, 1768.

Henry Vassall Esqr, subscriber to the above & foregoing Deposition being carefully examined & cautioned to testify the whole Truth made oath to the Truth of the same, he the said Henry is under such bodily Infirmities & sickness as render him incapable of travelling & appearing in Person at the Inferiour Court of Common Pleas now holden at Charlestown in & for the County of Middlesex at which Court there is a Cause depending — John Vassall Esqr. Plt. Richard Billings Deft, & in which Cause said Deposition was taken to be used.

The proceeds of the Jamaica sale did not long suffice for his needs, and in 1748 we find him mortgaging his Cambridge property as security on a loan of £779 from James Pitts, a rich Boston merchant, whom we shall hear more of.¹ In 1752 he recovered by due process of law² some £90 sterling on a note given in 1746 by his brother John, now deceased, probably in connection with the Jamaica transactions.

By what devices he tided over the deficits of the next few years we have little information,³ but it is probable that his wife's property formed the chief source of collateral, especially her undivided half of the "Popeshead" plantation at Antigua. The possibilities in that direction having apparently become exhausted by 1764, he was reduced to the necessity of borrowing some £430 from his daughter, who had just emerged from her minority into the convenient ownership of a small separate estate.⁴ The cash lasted him scarcely a month, and he became more deeply involved than ever. His creditors were pressing him hard and seemed about to take possession of Mrs. Vassall's equities remaining in the

¹ Middlesex Deeds, 48/81. For Pitts's next entry in the drama, see page 56.

² *Vassall v. Bill et al. exors.*, "Inferiour Court" files, Clerk's Office, East Cambridge.

³ The accounts for 1757 and 1758 mention numerous "notes of hand" for various amounts, as well as the payment of a "Bond to John Gore for £112.19.8 L.M." and of semi-annual interest of £132 (old tenor) on "my Bond to Mrs. Henderson."

⁴ The sum was secured only by his personal bond, dated December 10, 1764. Soon after Elizabeth's marriage her husband insisted on something more substantial, whereupon the Colonel blandly executed still another mortgage on the homestead February 20, 1769 — his last recorded act and a thoroughly characteristic one. Middlesex Deeds, 68/588.

Antigua lands. In this crisis he consulted his fidus Achates, John Rowe, one of Boston's leading merchants, who has given a vivid picture of the gravity of the situation — the wife's anxiety, the family councils, the calling-in of friends among eminent lawyers and men of affairs:

1765, Jan. 8th. Mrs. Vassall came from Cambridge on Certain Business and dind with Mrs. Rowe.

22nd. Colo Henry Vassall & Lady came to town today about Business.

Feb. 14th. Went afternoon to W^m Vassalls Esq^r and talkd over his Brother Henrys Affairs.

16th. dind at Colo Henry Vassall with M^r W^m Vassall & Chris: Minot M^{rs} Vassall & M^{rs} Cutler

18th. M^r W^m Vassall Coloⁿl Henry Vassall M^r Banister Mr Jnman Chris Minot & Colo Tho^s Oliver dind with Mrs. Rowe & Me after dinner we Consulted ab^o the Settlement of Colo Henry Vassalls affairs and after a long debate agreed on a plan of Settlement

22nd H Vassall came to town

28th. dind at M^r W^m Vassalls with him & Wife M^{rs} Symes Miss Christian & Miss Sally Vassalls Henry Vassall Esq^r & Lady Major John Vassall Colo. Oliver Colo Jerry Gridley Christo Minot This Afternoon M^r Henry Vassall & Wife executed the Deeds for the Farm & Negroes at Antigua

March 23d. Henry Vassall Esqr came after dinner and settled with me¹

These "deeds" took the shape of a formal partition of the Antigua property owned in common with Isaac Royall, whose sister's half, euphoniously described as "charged with certain sums to Lane & Co.," was now set off to her by definite bounds. This moiety was then conveyed to trustees,² one of whom seems to have been the obliging little Thomas Oliver, the Colonel's neighbor both at Popeshead and at Cambridge. The terms of the trust apparently³ provided that the income from the planta-

¹ MS. of Diary at Mass. Hist. Society. For the discovery of the above entries, and of other original sources, I must thank my friend, Charles M. Andrews, of Yale University.

² Antigua Records, Lib. W, vol. 5, fol. 222, and Lib. O, vol. 7, fol. 87. For the abstracts of these records I am indebted to the generous assistance of Vere L. Oliver, Esq., of Sunninghill, Berks., editor of *Caribbeana*.

³ See page 60.

tion should be used towards paying off the encumbrances with which it was so heavily burdened. In any case it is plain that practically nothing was added thereby to the Vassall till, for in a few months, after a final despairing trip to the islands,¹ the much harassed Henry was obliged to sell his thirty acres across Charles River (already mortgaged to Pitts) to Ebenezer Bradish, the college glazier, for £506.²

Two years later, by some financial sleight-of-hand that again testifies to his business adroitness, he managed to mortgage once more his long-suffering homestead for £225, this time to his boon companion Trollet, whom the cards had perhaps favored.³ This, however, was only an accommodation between friends. His general credit was now as dissipated as his habits, and towards the end his wife had to negotiate what small loans she could secure on her own account.⁴ During his last years, too, it is plain

¹ See page 27.

² October, 1765. Middlesex Deeds, 65/146. It is a significant fact that the next year Henry Vassall's name, although it heads the list of Christ Church parishioners made out by the *locum tenens*, Rev. Mr. Agar, is not among those marked by that ingenuous divine as "very rich" — *videlicet*: John Borland, William Vassall, John Apthorp, Ralph Inman, John Vassall, Thomas Oliver and Isaac Royall. (Original Letter-Book, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London.)

³ Middlesex Deeds, 67/205.

⁴ In 1767 and 1768, for example, she made a series of notes at regular intervals to her old friend Elizabeth Hughes, each for £26.13.4, perhaps to meet the interest on some other indebtedness. On these she was sued almost thirty years later! (No. 106852, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.) Another note of the same series, with interest endorsed up to July 20, 1769, is filed, apparently by mistake, with a collection of documents relating to William Vassall's lands in Pownalboro, 1776 *et seq.* Mass. Hist. Soc. Library, MSS. 026.2 "Vassall Papers."

"Mrs. Elizabeth Hughes of Cambridge, singlewoman," is another of the shadowy figures that flit through the Vassall and Royall records. Her family were neighbors of the Royalls at "Popeshead." One of them, Captain Richard, migrated to Boston, where in 1713 he married Sarah Reed; and Elizabeth, born 1719, was their child. Either in Antigua or at Boston she grew very friendly with the Royalls, for in 1746 old Madame Royall left her by will £300 "as a token of my love." Afterward she became either an inmate or a constant visitor at the Vassalls, and appears in the Colonel's accounts as receiving many small sums for "sundrys" and the like. Through the death of her parents she came into some property in Boston, and hence was able to alleviate the financial distresses of Mrs. Vassall. She died in 1771, leaving a number of the latter's unpaid notes in her inventory. Her gravestone is in the Copp's Hill ground. See Oliver, *History of Antigua*, ii, 88. Putnam, *Lieut. Joshua Hewes*, 417. Suffolk Probate, 14929.

that the greater part of his personal property, horses, slaves, etc., was turned into sorely needed cash. Under such notorious circumstances, therefore, it could have caused little surprise among the Cambridge gossips to learn after his death that he had not attempted to dispose of his shrunken and heavily hypothecated estate by will, and that the said estate (valued at only £1000 for the realty and £705 for the personalty¹) was shortly declared insolvent.

Considering the ample evidences of Henry Vassall's business ability, and the plump fortunes amassed by his brothers, and even allowing generously for the undoubted expense² of keeping up an establishment such as he delighted in, we must admit that it is difficult to explain where all his money went to, unless in some such manner as hinted above. Yet let us not frown too heavily on the failings of a Colonial gentleman of active spirit and ample leisure, who wrote *Esquire* after his name in a day when that suffix had a definite connotation. He had been born and bred amid the unexact moral standards of a clime where the spirit of pleasure had permeated his very marrow. Transplanted to a drier and more searching ethical atmosphere, his early inoculation (so to say) kept him immune from the scorching breath of the superheated New England conscience. Though he doubtless listened decorously enough to the fulminations of the orthodox ministry around him, in his own heart he felt free

¹ See Appendix A. In 1770, evidently before the Widow Vassall had made much further reduction in the estate, she was taxed 14/4 for the realty and 8/9 for the personalty. Her fallen fortunes may be inferred from a comparison of the taxes paid by the other members of her social set (Cambridge Tax List, 1770. Mass. Archives, 130/430):

Mr. & Mrs. Borland	£1.9.8 real	£6.16.11 personal
William Brattle	1.0.6	3.17.7
Ralph Inman	1.14.5	13.1
Joseph Lee	13.4	2.17.9
Richard Lechmere	19.3	2.9.6
Thomas Oliver	1.16.5	1.3.0
David Phips	1.5.8	15.5
George Ruggles	1.5.8	3.6
Jonathan Sewall	11.8	13.6
John Vassall	2.12.7	14.2

² The account book shows that in the years 1757 and 1758 his outlays for petty cash were about £9000 "old tenor," or £1200 lawful money (£900 sterling), per annum.

to follow the example of the hard-riding, hard-drinking parsons of the good old school in "the established church." And if he shared their weaknesses, he also shared their bluff and open-handed virtues.

For, paradoxical as it may appear, Henry Vassall, like his father before him, was a strong and generous supporter of religion. As such he is honorably remembered to-day, when his imperfections have been long forgotten, like many a character more completely canonized. The Church of England, his family creed, naturally came first in his interests. To its representatives his latch-string was always out and his purse-strings always loose. At the age of only twenty-five he gave forty pounds towards the rebuilding of King's Chapel,¹ and soon after the beautiful new edifice was finished he bought a pew. In maturer years he was elected a vestryman.² The fragment of his accounts that we possess gives an idea of his steady assistance to that parish:

- 1756 Apr. 26th. p^d Capt. Forbes for my pew at y^e Chapple £20.5
 Aug. 20 p^d Craddock my Subscription to Dipper [the organist] £10.10
 1758 Mar. 20th. tax of pew at Chapple £18.18
 1759 Apr. 9th. p^d tax & subscription to Chapple £42

Trinity Church, too, had reason to be grateful for his aid. He was, for example, one of the largest contributors to its first organ, and on Christmas Day, 1758, increased its collection by some twenty pounds.

All this time he was paying his regular "ministerial taxes" in Cambridge and Abraham Hasey's as well. More than that, he was displaying an admirably liberal spirit by subscribing handsomely to the new "meeting house" that Dr. Appleton was erecting there:

- 1756, Nov. 19th. pd. Sam'l Whittemore one third of my subscription to y^e meeting house £50
 1757, Sept. 17th. S. Whittemore being in full of my Subscription to the meeting house in Cambridge £100

¹ Adding the rather unusual but highly business-like proviso, — "One half to be paid when begun."

² Foote, *Annals of King's Chapel*, ii, *passim*.

Therein also he took a pew, one of the best, "between Lt. Col. David Phipp's pew on the right and Rev. Mr. President Holyoke's on the left."¹

Most memorable of all, he was the leader of the movement in 1759 for establishing Christ Church in Cambridge.² He headed the petition to enlist the aid of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; he subscribed £80 to the building fund; he cajoled £15 more out of the reprehensible Trollet and actually persuaded him to take a pew; he was chairman of the building committee;³ he bought a pew (No. 3) in the middle aisle, and he served as a vestryman,⁴ in either first or second place on the list, continuously from the organization of the parish till the day of his death. Perhaps in recognition of his services he was given the privilege of building the only tomb beneath the church.⁵

In that tomb he was duly laid, with characteristic elegance,

¹ See plan of pews in Paige, 293. He sold it to Harvard College in 1761, after Christ Church had been opened. Middlesex Deeds, 58/502.

² "Several branches of our Braintree family of Vassalls had removed and planted themselves in the very front of the university, and they must have an Episcopal church." J. Adams to Morse, Quincy, December 2, 1815. *Works of John Adams*, x, 187.

³ "Voted that Colo Henry Vassall make some enquiries, and take such measures as he shall think proper, about procuring Stone and Lime for building the Church." Records, October 3, 1759.

⁴ Though for some unexplained reason never as a warden, a position frequently occupied by his nephew John, and indeed by nearly all the prominent Cambridge Tories in turn.

⁵ The parish records are silent on the subject, but it seems probable that, sensible of his approaching dissolution, he caused his last resting place to be constructed during the progress of his final malady.

The tomb is a brick vault, 9 by 10 feet in area, sunk in the gravel of the cellar floor. Its slightly arched top was originally almost flush with the surface, but owing to a recent lowering of the grade, now protrudes for about a foot. Its main axis is east and west, or transverse to that of the church building. The door, at the west end, was originally reached by a flight of stone steps, now removed and filled in. Against the upper part of the bricked-up entrance arch, and projecting above ground, has been erected a slate slab inscribed HENRY VASSELL. The structure is now almost in the middle of the cellar, but before the lengthening of the church it was much nearer the chancel — probably directly below the pew of its owner, who had one of the best seats in the edifice, although the exact location is conjectural to-day. At least the tomb is not centred on the main axis of the church, but is pushed a little to the west, so as to bring it, not under the middle aisle, but under a pew on the right-hand side thereof.

For the interments in the Vassall tomb see note, page 78.

when a lingering illness had brought his gay life to a close — after that fitful fever sleeping well amid the old Cambridge surroundings that he loved, happy in escaping the fast-approaching tribulations which were to allot scattered and distant graves to his family and friends who kept allegiance to the King's most excellent majesty, his crown and dignity. The Boston papers for Monday, March 20, 1769, contained the following item:

On Friday laft Col. HENRY VASSALL departed this Life in the 48th Year of Age, at his Seat in *Cambridge*. We hear that he will be interr'd if the Weather permits, on *Wednesday* next, and that the Funeral will go precifely at 4 o'Clock in the Afternoon.¹

The service took place as announced, a typical March gale being only the weather to be expected. Thanks to trusty John Rowe, we actually have the scene before us — unique of its kind in the annals of Christ Church:

1769, March 22. Wed. Very Cold Blows hard N.West. Dined at Mr. Inman at Cambridge with him, Mr. Cromwell, Lady Frankland,² Mrs. Harding, Miss Molly Wethered, Mrs. Rowe & George Inman. In the afternoon I went to the Funerall of Henry Vassall Esq. I was a pall-holder, together with Gen. Brattle, Col. Phipps, Jos. Lee Esq., Rich^d Lechmere Esq. & Robert Temple Esq. It was a very handsome Funerall & a great number of people & carriages.

III

The Widow Penelope after these elaborate obsequies continued, as best she could, to occupy the stripped and mortgaged homestead. We have a sight of her entertaining a mighty genteel company, "drinking tea and coffee," on the occasion of the christening of her namesake — her daughter's baby, Penelope Russell.³ She dutifully began the attempt to pay off her hus-

¹ *Boston Post Boy & Advertiser*. Similar notices are in each of the other papers, except that the *Boston Evening Post* adds "after a lingering Illness." We have seen (page 38) that he was too sick to go to Charlestown just a year before. The register of Christ Church gives his death on the 17th, but no mention of his burial.

² Lady Frankland with her son Henry Cromwell had returned to Boston and Hopkinton in June of the previous year, after the death of her husband at Bath. They were particular friends of the Inmans, and intimate with the whole Cambridge coterie. A touch of romance is added to Henry Vassall's funeral by the presence of "the beautiful Agnes Surriage."

³ Rowe, *Diary*, April 9, 1769. Cf. Christ Church register and Harris, *The*



Penelope Papall

*Engraved for The Cambridge Historical Society
from an original portrait in the possession of
Richard Henry Dunn*

band's debts, probably with the aid of the Royalls and the Russells.¹ To raise funds she evidently strained her slender resources to the utmost, as is shown in the pitiful appraisal of her property remaining in 1778.² But the earnest efforts of a reduced gentlewoman to satisfy her vicarious creditors gave her little popular sympathy, so long as she echoed the sentiments and followed the fortunes of that unhappily prominent Cambridge faction that persisted in its loyalty to King George.

Herein lay her undoing. Penelope Vassall's temperament was of the type that copies rather than originates. From her family characteristics, her early environment, and her later history we picture her as lacking in nearly all the sturdier New England virtues. The scanty traces she has left on the narrative of her generation are as pale as if recorded with disappearing ink. She seems to have been too frail to rear the large family that was then customary. Her portrait, painted in her younger days, shows her as small and delicate, with little individuality. The few remaining specimens of her handwriting are unformed and crude to the point of childishness. In a crisis she possessed neither the firmness for independent action that might have carried the day, nor the prudent self-effacement that might have enabled her, along with such ultra-moderates as her neighbor, Judge Lee, to lie by while the storm passed overhead.

The latter course she could have followed with comparative ease. There is no record that either she or her husband had ever adopted an attitude that gave grounds for any active hostility from the "sons of liberty." He had held no royal offices, signed no "loyal addresses," or taken other steps that would have rendered his memory obnoxious. He had not been a member of that inner ring of Tories upon whom the full weight of revolutionary wrath

Vassalls of New England, 22. Mr. and Mrs. Rowe "stood Sponsors." In 1757 Mrs. Vassall had been a "surety" along with Gov. Benning Wentworth and Charles Paxton at the baptism of young Benning at King's Chapel, Boston. (*Wentworth Genealogy*, i, 534.) That seems to be almost the only mark she has left on the records of her time, up to her husband's death. It suggests at least the society in which she moved.

¹ Trollet assigned his mortgage to her in 1770 for £266.13.4. (Middlesex Deeds, 71/18.) In June of 1773 she got £490 ready money from George Minot, who then paid off a mortgage of which she had become assignee. (Suffolk Deeds, 121/129, *margin*.)

² See page 55 and Appendix B. For the sale of the slaves see page 68.

descended. On the contrary he was plainly far from unpopular with his townsmen.¹ Even the motto on his crest chimed closely with their underlying thought in the earlier days of the struggle — “Often for King, for Country always.”² His remaining property was, alas, scarcely enough to excite a beggar’s cupidity. And since he had been dead for nearly six years before affairs reached the climax, it is conceivable that his spouse, had she remained quietly on the homestead, might well have avoided serious molestation.

Had she realized it, indeed, nothing would have served her so well as sticking to the ship. In those days of fantastic mistrust, steadfastness when surrounded by the insurgents seemed to prove one’s sympathy with their cause; flight showed one’s adherence to the established order. The paradox was widely accepted as a test by both sides. Thus, the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel based his conviction of one of its missionaries for treachery on the theory that “if Mr. Bass had been truly loyal, I can’t see how it was possible for him to stay at Newburyport, a place so much in favor of the other part.”³ Per contra, even the estimable “Ebenezer Bradish, Jun. Esq.,” who happened to “withdraw himself from Cambridge and retire to Boston on the day of the late unhappy commencement of hostilities,” so “increased the publick suspicions against him, whereby he is rendered more odious and disagreeable to his countrymen,” that he required an imposing certificate from a number of leading patriots to prevent the impression that he was “a person unfriendly to the just rights and liberties of his Country.”⁴ But as for Penelope Vassall, with the fatal facility for imitation that sometimes marks the feminine mind, she did as her fashionable friends and neighbors did, and during the memo-

¹ A curious confirmation of his amicable relations with his neighbors is to be found in the almost total absence of his name from the court records of his time, while his brothers John and William and his nephew John figure in some rather famous suits. (Cf. Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 131, etc.) It will be noticed, too, that none of his numerous mortgagees took advantage of their foreclosure rights as long as his widow continued to occupy the premises, but seem to have accorded her every consideration.

² *Saepe pro rege, semper pro republica*. The radicalism of the sentiment so grated upon the loyalty of his nephew, John Vassall, that he abandoned its use altogether.

³ Bartlett, *Frontier Missionary*, 313.

⁴ Force, *American Archives*, 4th Series, ii, 484. May 3, 1775.

rable winter of 1774-75¹ followed them into Boston to seek the protection of Thomas Gage. From that moment the die was cast.

By the date of the Battle of Lexington her son-in-law, Dr. Russell, correctly diagnosing certain feverish symptoms in the body politic, was discreetly embarked for Martinico, probably with his wife and family, which now numbered several daughters.² (Henry Vassall had neither sons nor grandsons.) The Widow seems to have lingered to save what she could from the old home; for after it was seized by the provincials, her "packages" of personal belongings, which Heaven knows must have been attenuated enough,³ were graciously allowed to "pass into Boston or elsewhere."⁴ A quaint exception was made of her medicine chest, long a carefully cherished family treasure.⁵ It was too valuable to be lost to the Continental medical corps. For some time, indeed, it was one of the only two supply boxes they possessed.⁶

¹ The precise date is difficult to determine. She would naturally follow the movements of her nephew, John Vassall, across the road. Foote says the latter was driven out of town by a mob early in 1775 (*Annals of King's Chapel*, ii, 315), but this seems to lack confirmation. The certificate of the Cambridge selectmen who confiscated his property states that he "went to our Enemies in April 1775," but the word "April" is struck through with the pen. (Middlesex Probate, 23340, O.S.) Mrs. Vassall's brother, Isaac Royall, did not definitely retire from his Medford mansion until April 16. (Suffolk Probate, 85/531.) It is unquestionably picturesque to refer to the "flight" of the Tories into Boston, but "straggle" is a more accurate term.

² Harris, *Vassalls of New England*, 21.

³ A far richer and more influential personage, Lady Frankland, on retiring from Hopkinton, was allowed to take only "6 trunks, 1 chest, 3 beds and bedding, 6 wethers, 2 pigs, 1 small keg of pickled tongues, some hay, 3 bags of corn and such other goods as she thinks proper." The elastic interpretation placed upon the final clause, and the alarming consequences, provide both entertainment and instruction for the reader of the *American Archives*.

⁴ *Committee of Safety Journals*, May 13, 1775. In the first confusion over the disposition of the Loyalists' abandoned property, we find "Mr. David Sanger directed to fill the widow Vassall's barns with hay," on July 4, and a couple of days later Mr. Seth Brown ordered "to clear the widow Vassall's barns for the reception of hay and horses for the colony service," etc. (*Idem*, 586, 587.) The house itself was by this time in active use as medical headquarters. (See page 53.)

⁵ "Jan. 1, 1757. pd. mending key Medecine Chest, &c. £1:6." (Account book, *ubi supra*.) This private drug-store, for it appears to have been no less, affords, like the family fire-engine, another instance of the unusual elaboration of the household arrangements. Colonel Vassall was evidently prepared to cope with inflammatory conditions of every description. See also p. 81, middle.

⁶ The other was in Roxbury. See report of committee, June 12, 1775. *Journals of Provincial Congress*, 323.

With her pathetic scraps of salvage, therefore, our Penelope turned toward her family estates in Antigua.¹ There is a quite believable story that in the haste and bewilderment of her start she had to take along a certain Miss Moody, related to the Pepperells of Kittery, a damsel who happened to be staying with her and who could find no opportunity of getting home again. In the West Indies, according to the tradition, while waiting a chance to return, this unintentional refugee was courted, married, and finally settled down for life.²

But to reach Antigua was now no easy matter. Dr. Russell must have sailed on one of the last ships that left Boston for the Caribbean, and by the time that his mother-in-law had decided on any definite course of action the only port where she could hope to embark was Salem — probably the “elsewhere” specifically in mind when her property pass was issued to her. Thither her brother had already betaken himself with the same object, and thither she seems to have followed him. Both were doomed to disappointment. Not a passage to the southward could be procured. In this dilemma Isaac Royall determined “with great reluctance” to push on to Halifax and thence to England, giving the abject excuse that “my health and business require it.”³

¹ Winsor, *Memorial History of Boston*, iii, 111. Harris, *Vassalls of New England*, 14.

² *The Cambridge of 1776*, 100. The tale is substantiated to the extent that the first William Pepperell's granddaughter, Mary Jackson, born 1713, married a man named Moody. (Howard, *Pepperells in America*, 17.) The name was common in the Pepperell neighborhood, at Kittery, York, etc. It is also found, however, in the records of Montserrat. The man in question, for example, may have been George Moody, born there in 1726. (*Caribbeana*, i, 43.) If so, the young lady would naturally have found herself very much at home in the West Indies. It was also natural that she should put herself under the protection of Madame Vassall, for the latter's niece, Elizabeth Royall, had married “Young Sir William” Pepperell when he assumed his grandfather's title in 1767. As the baronet and his wife sailed for England in 1775, it is quite understandable that a relative who really wished to go to the islands should have kept with Mrs. Vassall.

For the following interesting variant on the tradition I am indebted to Henry Vassall's great-great-grand-nephew, John Vassall Calder, Esq., who still occupies a part of the Jamaica property at Worthy Park: “As you are aware, at the time of the Revolution the Vassalls had to flee from Boston, and it is said they left a girl with her nurse who was never heard of. About fifty years ago my Grandmother got a letter from a woman who claimed relationship as being the descendant of the lost girl; she never answered the letter.”

³ Brooks, *History of Medford*, 147. Foote, *Annals of King's Chapel*, ii, 311.

From a step so bold and unaccustomed Penelope Vassall recoiled. One more chance remained for carrying out her original plan. Bidding her brother (as it proved) a last farewell, she joined one of the parties of Tories who in the panic after the first blood-letting of the war hurried off to Nantucket, on the well-founded assumption that that shrewdly self-centred and ultra-pacific Quaker community would prove a sort of neutral territory or safety-zone. Among these Loyalists was Mrs. Mary Holyoke of Salem, whose connections in Cambridge had often brought her to that village. Debarking at the island on April 29th, she records in her diary and letters the numerous acquaintances that flocked thither for weeks afterwards. On May 21st she notes, — "Mrs. Vassal & Fitchs¹ Family arrived." And on June 2nd, — "Drank tea [!] yesterday at old Friend Husseys with Friend Vassel."²

No further mention of Mrs. Vassall at Nantucket occurs, and it is to be supposed that among the extensive shipping of that seafaring population³ she soon found opportunity to fulfil her intention of sailing for Antigua. Her destination once reached, however, proved but a gloomy haven of refuge. Her own patrimony at "Popeshead," by transactions already narrated,⁴ was no longer at her disposal, and she not improbably sheltered herself on the adjacent plantation of her brother, where she was joined by the Russells. But conditions on the island were now very different from those of her girlhood there. Her elegant, affluent friends were gone. Times were bad. The sugar market had been paralyzed by the war. The cost of the simplest commodities had quadrupled.⁵ The estates were neglected. Many were abandoned altogether and overrun by the peculiar rank grass that is the bane of Antigua agriculture. The seasons, too,

¹ Samuel Fitch, the Boston lawyer, was a noted Tory, proscribed in 1778. Like most of the other Nantucket refugees, he soon plucked up courage and returned to the mainland. He stayed out the Siege of Boston, and at the Evacuation went to Halifax with a family of seven.

² Dow, *The Holyoke Diaries*, 87 and 88, n. Some of the Nantucket Husseys owned lands in Cambridge.

³ The widespread commercial interests of Nantucket at this period made it almost as important a point of departure for travellers as is New York City to-day. During the Revolution the West India trade was continued pertinaciously, its danger being more than compensated by its profit.

⁴ See page 39.

⁵ Southey, *Chronological History of the West Indies*, ii, 425.

were unpropitious; a series of disastrous droughts and terrific hurricanes added to the ruin. One after another the planters went down in financial wreck.¹ Most of the non-resident owners, now a thousand leagues overseas, could no longer make their trips of inspection; and their local agents, always sufficiently unscrupulous, were busily feathering their own nests with what remained. Matters went from bad to worse. In 1778 there was no crop whatever, the drought having destroyed all the cane.² In 1779 "every part of the surface of the ground became parched up, and all the ponds were dry. The importation of water was altogether insufficient to supply the demand. The stock and negroes perished in the greatest agony; and a malignant fever at the same time threatened total destruction to all."³ In 1780-81 the climax of Mrs. Vassall's own misfortunes came with the deaths of her son-in-law, Dr. Russell, her last male protector, and her pusillanimous brother, Isaac Royall, who, ignoring his sister in his will, devised his plantation to his own child, Elizabeth.⁴ Mrs. Russell, now thrown with her daughters upon her mother's hands, thus definitively empty, was like her parent the guileless victim of her own countrymen's revengeful greed. Her

¹ A visitor in 1787 wrote: "This country is poor, most of the landholders being impoverished from a series of bad crops previous to the last three years. In fact, the greater part of the estates in this island are in trust, or under mortgage to the merchants of London, Liverpool and Bristol." Luffman, *Brief Account of the Island of Antigua*, 49.

In Jamaica, from 1772 to 1791, more than one-third of the planters passed through bankruptcy, and a considerable proportion of the plantations was given up. (See the sympathetic and comprehensive account by Phillips, "A Jamaica Slave Plantation," *American Hist. Review*, xix, 543.) John Vassall stated that he "had £3,000 a year coming in from his Jamaica Estate before the Hurricane" — a particularly calamitous visitation occurred in 1780 — and "His Estate having suffered considerably by the Hurricane, is the Cause of it's not having produced him anything since 1781," so that "he has laid down his Coach & given up his House [at Clapham] & lives at Bristol." (1783-84.) *American Loyalists Transcripts*, iv, 388 and vii, 180. New York Public Library.

² Edwards, *History of the West Indies*, (1793) i, 447.

³ Southey, *Chronological Hist. W. I.*, ii, 459.

⁴ Suffolk Probate, 85/531. She had married Sir William Pepperell (Sparhawk), who is accordingly described later as "owner of Royalls, Antigua." (Oliver, *History of Antigua*, iii, 56.) The place was evidently in no condition to attract him as a residence, for he soon sold it to Thomas Oliver (cf. p. 60, n) and continued to live in England till his death in 1816. It may be added that the desolated state of the West Indies, and the serious interruption of communication with them, account for the appearance in England of many Loyalists, who might have been expected to take refuge on their own insular possessions.

husband's property at home had been confiscated, and he himself forbidden to return.¹ Mother, daughter, and granddaughters formed a sad illustration of the familiar axiom that the Loyalists seemed to leave naught behind them but homeless widows and unprovided orphans, — whose sufferings tempt us to go a step beyond the poet's line and add that even when it is not fated that men must work, still women must weep.

It was at about this time that poor Penelope, lonely and bereft, gathered her little flock about her and, giving a last good-bye to her childhood's home, returned with a sort of childish hopefulness to the scene of her married life. Yet how changed that scene! Marius among the ruins of Carthage was a thing of joy and gladness compared to a Loyalist in Cambridge after the Revolution. The college, it is true, with the placid persistence of an institution whose thoughts were not of this world, still calmly ground out, much as of yore, its annual grist of ministers. But the once thriving village, famed for its beauty, with its common "like a bowling green," was almost unrecognizable. Spared, to be sure, from the actual ravages of the enemy that had desolated Portland, New Haven, and others of its ilk, it yet had endured the almost equally severe handling of a year's occupation by an ill-disciplined militia² and the hard usage of another year as a prison camp. Dwellings had been maltreated, fences torn away, tillage laid waste, timber and shade trees felled, roads ruined, and farms "thrown open, cut up and broken to pieces."³ "Oh!" wrote a visitor to the famous Inman place after the Siege of Boston, "that imagination could replace the wood lot, the willows round the pond, the locust trees that so delightfully ornamented and shaded the roads leading to this farm . . . but in vain to wish it, — every beauty of art or nature, every elegance which it cost years of care and toil in bringing to perfection, is laid low. It looks like an unfrequented desert, and this farm

¹ "Charles Russell of Lincoln, physician," was included in the Proscription Act of October 16, 1778. *Mass. Province Laws*, v, 914.

² One excuse offered for the vile accommodations given the Convention Troops a year and a half afterward was "the late Devastation and Destruction of the Neighbourhood." Burgoyne to Laurens, Cambridge, February 11, 1778. Colonial Office Class 5, vol. 95, p. 385. Public Record Office, London.

³ Dana to Heath. York Town, December 8, 1777. *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collections*, 7th Series, iv, pt. ii, 191.

is an epitome of all Cambridge, [once] the loveliest village in America."¹ Dilapidated store-sheds,² with the ragged cellar-holes and ditches of vanished encampments, disfigured the centre of the town; gaunt heaps of dismantled earthworks encumbered the approaches; and ramshackle barracks, already falling to decay, rattled and swayed in the winds that swept the surrounding hilltops. The very tombs of the dead in the town burying ground had been despoiled of their leaden inscription-panels. The living population was miserably reduced in every sense of the word. Of the natives, many had moved away,³ others had entered the army, and some had fallen on the field of battle. Of

¹ *Letters of James Murray, Loyalist*, 246. (April 17, 1776.) General Greene wrote, Dec. 31, 1775: "We have suffered prodigiously for want of wood. . . notwithstanding we have burnt up all the fences and cut down all the trees for a mile round the camp." An account of the insurgents in a London paper observes,—"They have burnt all the fruit-trees and those planted for ornament in the environs of Cambridge." Frothingham, *Siege of Boston*, 276 and n.

² "The town of Cambridge is about six miles from Boston, and was the country residence of the gentry of that city; there are a number of fine houses in it going to decay, belonging to the Loyalists. The town must have been extremely pleasant, but its beauty is much defaced, being now only an arsenal for military stores." (Letter of November 30, 1777. Anburey, *Travels through America*, ii, 67.) For the curious continuance of Cambridge as a military depot up to recent times, see the article by A. M. Howe, "The Arsenal and the Guns on the Common," *Cambridge Hist. Soc. Proceedings*, vi, 5.

³ Overshadowed by the more dramatic departure of the Tories, the much larger exodus of the natives from Cambridge in 1775-76 has escaped general attention. With the very first hostilities the women and children all left town (Letter of Mrs. Inman, Cambridge, April 22, 1775. *Letters of James Murray, Loyalist*, 184), followed almost immediately by the entire personnel of Harvard College, including all the transient and many of the hitherto permanent elements of the population. Substantial citizens of two opposite classes also disappeared, the militarists enlisting in the army and the pacifists seeking a less warlike environment. Among them were many landholders. The tax list for 1777 (preserved in Mass. Archives, 322/123) gives 191 taxpayers in the village itself, 124 in Menotomy, 87 "south of Charles River," and 96 "non-residents." The names are all indigenous: no account is taken of Loyalist absentees or their confiscated estates. That year's total of 498 polls continued to decrease, until in 1781 there were but 417 (Mass. Archives, 161/369); and even as late as 1822 the number of voters was only 475 (Paige, 448).

A striking effect of this exodus is found in a comparison of the census figures for 1765 and 1776. (Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 452.) During that interval most Massachusetts towns of 1500 population had increased to 1900-odd. In Cambridge this normal increase was completely wiped out by the hegira of the final two years, so that the net gain in eleven years was only about a dozen persons.

the old aristocracy, the Phipses and the Inmans, the Ruggleses and the Borlands, the Lechmeres and the Olivers, were gone, never to return. The local trades and industries that once supplied their numerous minor wants were well-nigh extinguished. The plentiful golden sovereigns that used to jingle in many a townsman's pocket had been replaced by infrequent scraps of dirty and almost valueless paper. The beautiful little church that Henry Vassall had practically founded was desecrated and closed; its jovial English parson was a penniless paralytic, dying by inches at Bath in the old country. Bitterest sight of all was the former homestead, fast deteriorating in heedless plebeian hands, after a series of vicissitudes so rapid, varied, and bizarre that a stouter heart than the Widow's might well have stood aghast at their recital.

Penelope Vassall's abandonment of the property, indeed, may be said to have been the first episode of a chapter in which the history of the estate, long mounting in interest and brilliancy like the glittering ascent of a rocket, suddenly "broke" in a cluster of spectacular incidents that seem by contrast to throw into deeper shadow its subsequent descent to the commonplace dinginess of to-day. The first and most harrowing metamorphosis had begun under her very eyes, when the home that had sheltered her for thirty-three years was seized by the revolutionists for their military hospital. That term at its best in the eighteenth century connoted something incomprehensible to the reader of the twentieth, but in the conditions at Cambridge in the spring of 1775 it implied a scene of confusion, misery, and horror that at first appeared little better than a shambles.¹ Without the benefits either of reasonable foresight or of previous experience, without time for preparation, without sufficient accommodations, without system, without a regular staff, without medicines, instruments, or appliances, without (of course) anæsthetics — save rum — this last refuge for the sick and dying might have seemed about to take a place in medical annals almost on a level with Libby Prison or the Black Hole of Calcutta. But New England physicians

¹ "We see Doct. Turner perform the office of surgery (or rather of butchery) on one Jones of Capt. Ripley's Company, who had a great mortification sore on his side. After we had seen the aforesaid operation with great pity to the patient we came home." *Diary of Jabez Fitch, Mass. Hist. Society Proceedings, Second Series*, ix, 88.

have never lacked courage and resource. Their own vigorous efforts were soon seconded by the best medical talent from the other colonies and directed by the administrative genius of Washington. Affairs took on a new complexion, the principal difficulties of the situation were gradually overcome, and before the end of the Siege of Boston the Vassall house had attained well-merited historic fame as the original headquarters of the Continental medical department.¹

When finally abandoned by the military authorities the Widow Vassall's property, as she subsequently learned, had been promptly seized by the civil, as coming under the legislative resolve just passed which confiscated the estates of persons who were "Enemy to the Colony and have fled to Boston or elsewhere for Protection."² Unable to make a better disposition of it, the committee leased it for £15 a year to "Capt. Adams of Charlestown."³ In him we probably discern Nathan Adams, veteran of the French War, later carpenter and innkeeper by turns, whose own house at Charlestown had been burned during the affair at Bunker's Hill.⁴

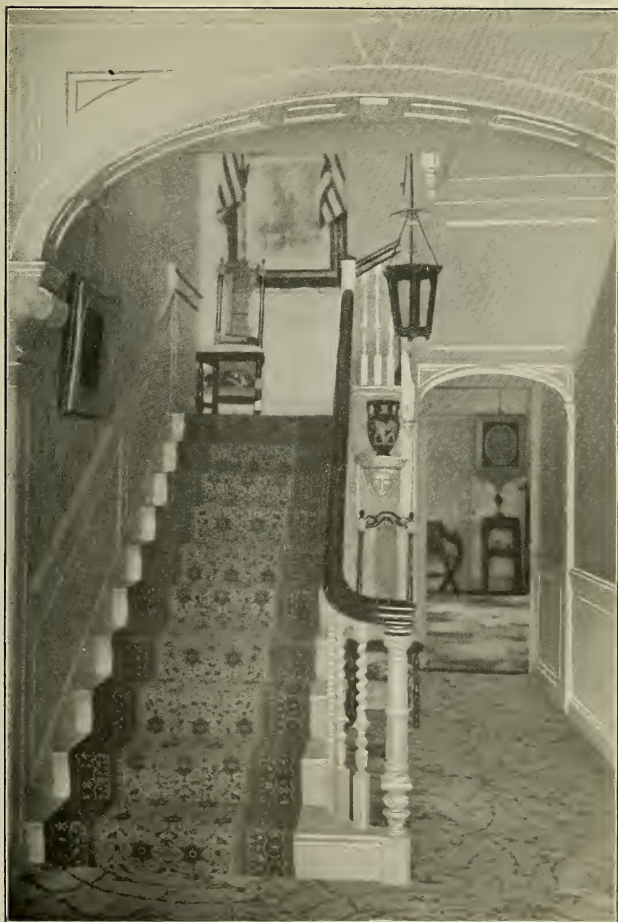
In his new domicile he soon had opportunity to revive his old calling and play the host to unexpectedly distinguished guests. For on the 6th and 7th of November, 1777, Cambridge found itself invaded by the enemy in greater numbers and with more serious results than at any other period of its revolutionary history. These warriors, to be sure, bore neither arms nor malice against the town, being in short the heterogeneous horde of British and Hessians who made up the "Convention Troops" under Burgoyne,

¹ For a detailed study of this subject see the second part of this paper.

² Such was the paraphrase of the Cambridge committee in its report. (1776. Mass. Archives, 154/48.) The actual language of the resolve (April 19, 1776) referred to those who "have fled to Boston in the late time of distress to secure themselves," thus ingeniously setting up cowardice as a test of loyalty. The whole shameful history of the Confiscation Acts may be found in Goodell's invaluable compilation, *Mass. Province Laws*, v, 706 and 999. See also the illuminating commentary of Davis, *John Chandler's Estate*, ch. iii.

³ 1776. Mass. Archives, 154/48. This rental was much the smallest of any of the Cambridge confiscated estates — additional evidence of the condition of the property.

⁴ *Robert Adams History*, 12. Cf. Hunnewell, *A Century of Town Life*, 134, 156. In like manner a number of other mansions of the Cambridge Tories after confiscation were leased to various Charlestown refugees, by a kind of poetic justice.



HENRY VASSALL HOUSE—EAST STAIRCASE

The great dining-room beyond

on their way from the fatal field of Saratoga to the transports that were expected soon to embark them at Boston and return them to England, according to agreement. The Colonel's homestead and the Captain's temporary leasehold was, not inappropriately, one of the very first edifices taken for housing the officers of the British contingent, its tenant displaying a willingness to receive them that contrasts sharply with the churlish attitude unfortunately adopted by the townspeople in general. Had they followed his example, indeed, not only would the annals of Cambridge have been spared a deep blemish, but the whole history of the Convention Troops, and thus of the later stages of the Revolution itself, might have been very different from the actual outcome.¹ As it befell, however, the expected speedy embarkation was postponed indefinitely, and the notorious stand taken by the American Congress as to the fulfilment of the Saratoga Convention resulted in the occupation of the house by the captives for a full year.

Not until November, 1778, were the last of the luckless troops and subordinate officers marched away from Cambridge on the succeeding stage of their phantasmal journey to freedom, and Henry Vassall's mansion bade a final farewell to the scarlet and gold of that royal uniform which he himself had been wont to don. Then it was that the old house, already headquarters-hospital, prison and barracks, sank to the lowest level of its military history and became mere loot. Tired of the farce of "preserving" and "improving" property which they never intended the owners should repossess, the Massachusetts authorities ordered a general sale of the Loyalists' remaining estates. "William How, trader," of Cambridge was the "agent" for what poor personalty of Madame Vassall's could still be ferreted out by her zealous and "patriotic" fellow townsmen.² The "vendue" took place April 1, 1779, with ironical solemnity and every outward form that could give a color of legality to this final act of injustice.³ Everything went, from the tattered wreck of the great

¹ For fuller consideration of this matter see *post*, as above.

² Mass. Archives, 154/332.

³ Certificate of Selectmen, June 1, 1778; order for inventory, June 8, 1778; inventory dated June 24, 1778. (See Appendix B); commissioners sworn January 11, 1779; sale, April 1, 1779; agent's account allowed and filed Decem-

chariot to "3 beehives," from which, as from other lordlier homes, the Tory drones had long ago flown. Nearly all the useful articles having already disappeared, the bulk of the sale-catalogue was composed of the pictures, mostly put up in arbitrary lots of half-a-dozen, and knocked down to whichever of the local Bradishes, Palmers, Reads, Prentices, and Wyeths would take them. The total realized the apparently imposing sum of £275 — in paper, or "old Emission," but worth in "silver money £25."¹

The realty, though it could not be treated so cavalierly, was disposed of quite as effectually. The Act of 1780, by which "absentee" estates were to be sold at auction, excepted such as were under mortgage before April 19, 1775 — of course with the understanding that the mortgagee was a good "friend of liberty." Whether by virtue of his unquestioned prominence in such a capacity, or by a technical priority of claim, the almost forgotten James Pitts, the Colonel's creditor of 1748,² now reappears upon the scene. As a matter of fact he reappears only in name, since he had died in 1776. But he had left behind as executor his enterprising and equally "patriotic" son John. As soon as the Legislature, of which the latter was a member, began to consider the above action, he evidently took steps to secure his testator's long-dormant and possibly doubtful claims to the Vassall place, cannily making hay while the sun shone in a field where there was none to say him nay.³ So complete was the success of his machinations that by the time Mrs. Vassall reached Cambridge again (perhaps hastened by rumors of what had been going on in her absence) she found herself as thoroughly dispossessed as the veriest ghost.

Had John Pitts taken his gentle little victim into his confidence he might have confessed that the game proved hardly worth the candle. In 1781 he complained to his brother-in-law that the old gentleman's numerous and widely scattered properties were

ber 5, 1781. (Middlesex Probate, No. 23342, O.S.) The last date seems a clue to the time of the real owner's return, actual or impending.

¹ In Mass. Archives, 154/257, the personalty before the sale was appraised at £29. As to the pictures, see page 13.

² See page 38.

³ "Jno Pitt, Esq.," a "non-resident," was taxed £5.4.6 for real estate in Cambridge in 1777. (Mass. Archives, 322/123.) The property is not specified, but there is little room for doubt on the question.

being so mercilessly stripped and at the same time so mercilessly taxed that they must be sold. The next year he wrote that the scarcity of cash and the enormous taxes were driving folks mad, but that much of his father's property had fortunately been got rid of. "We have also disposed of Vassalls place at Cambridge to Nathaniel Tracy Esq. for Eight hundred and fifty pounds, payable in one year." The price, he added, in view of the tremendous shrinkage in realty values, was considered very high — but so were the risks of collecting it from a purchaser whose interests were mainly in shipping.¹

Nathaniel Tracy was in effect one of those merchant princes whose romantic fortunes and extraordinary idiosyncrasies have cast a glamour over the history of the ancient town of Newburyport.² He had a passion for acquiring fine houses. His purchases, it is said, extended along the whole Atlantic coast as far as Philadelphia.³ Among his Cambridge takings at this period were the three hundred acres of the famous "Ten Hills Farm," the former seat of the Temples.⁴ He had already bought the John Vassall estate across the road, and seems to have added the homestead merely because it was adjacent and in the market. But he flew his financial kite too high. His sevenscore merchantmen and cruising ships were wrecked or captured, his huge government contracts were repudiated, and in a few years he conveyed his property for the benefit of creditors.⁵ The old place hung in the wind for some time, till finally taken, along with the other family seat (a total of over one hundred and forty acres), by Andrew Craigie in 1792, "being the late Homestead of Henry Vassall, Esquire."⁶

The active and ingenious Mr. Craigie had an intimate knowledge of the house already. He had been the first Apothecary General of the Continental Army, and as such a constant at-

¹ Senator John Pitts to Colonel Warner of Portsmouth, Boston, May 10, 1782. *James Pitts Memorial*, 58. For the conveyance itself, dated April 14, 1782, see Middlesex Deeds, 83/170.

² For biography and portrait see J. J. Currier, *Old Newbury*, 554. *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, xxv, 193.

³ *Historic Guide to Cambridge*, 101.

⁴ Middlesex Deeds, 83/171.

⁵ 1786. Middlesex Deeds, 94/383.

⁶ Middlesex Deeds, 110/406.

tendant at the former medical headquarters — high-priest, so to speak, at the shrine of that chest¹ which once concealed a moiety of all his malodorous mysteries. He too was now immensely wealthy, but for him also the whirligig of time brought in its revenges; his ambitious projects in Cambridge real estate proved premature, and like so many other owners of the old mansion he died a bankrupt.²

That, to be sure, was long after the Widow Vassall's day. During her lifetime the beautiful old place seemed doomed to be bandied about with true American *insouciance* — now as a mere land speculation, now to round out a deal in neighboring properties — and in requital seeming to bring only bad luck to its holders. Its character as a homestead was utterly gone. None of its transitory owners lived in it. Up to the time it was sold by the Pittses, Captain Adams continued his precarious occupancy.³ If young Pitts and inherent probability are to be trusted, he took good care to leave as little as possible behind him. Both Tracy and Craigie naturally preferred the better preserved grandeurs of the newer mansion across the road. The former leased the old house to one Fred Geyer, grandson of Governor Belcher, who had owned it from 1717 to 1719; the latter to Mr. Bossenger Foster, his brother-in-law and a "gentleman of leisure," who like Trollett died of the gout.⁴

Its rightful mistress could only look on in silent hopelessness as the estate drifted further and further beyond her reach. Un-

¹ See page 47.

² 1819. "Well would it have been for him if his friends could have said to him, — 'Thou hast no speculation in thine eyes.' But he had, and a great deal of it. His plan was to develop Lechmere's Point, called in my younger days 'The Pint,' and bring into the market the land he had secured there. The new road to 'The Colleges,' now Cambridge Street, the bridge to Boston, still called Craigie's bridge, the removal to the 'Pint' of the Court House and Jail, were all parts of this plan. . . . The [turnpike] toll which was to repay the building was found represented only by the funeral knell of departed funds." John Holmes, "Andrew Craigie."

³ Although the "agents" of the confiscated estates were authorized to lease them for only one year, Mr. Mason, in the same way, kept his occupancy of the Phips house for a decade. (*Historic Guide to Cambridge*, 83. See note, page 54.) Adams's name is repeated as the tenant of the Vassall house in Mass. Archives, 154/382, under the assigned date of 1782. But shortly after the sale to Tracy, he is described as "of Stoneham" (1783). Wyman, *Genealogies and Estates of Charlestown*, i, 10.

⁴ Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 547, etc.; *Cambridge Hist. Soc. Proc.* ix, 7.

like some of the more fortunate and forceful Loyalists who dared to return after the war, she had no influential champions to cajole or bully the authorities into restoring her property. Her immediate male relatives were in England, and for all the good they did her might as well have been in an old ladies' home. Her brother Isaac Royall, "confessedly a gen^t of much timidity," was dying at Kensington; her nephew, John Vassall, was "living very comfortably" at Clapham, spending his time in grumbling and pension-hunting; her brother-in-law, William Vassall, was busy writing lachrymose letters bewailing his own lost property in Boston. Her former neighbors who had espoused the patriot cause had little but hard looks and muttered accusations for anyone who could be held even remotely responsible for the sore straits in which they now found themselves.

Outcast and homeless in Cambridge, she took refuge in Boston, most likely with the Russell connections. There she passed the wretched remainder of her days, in sad contrast with her earlier years. She had been ruthlessly robbed of her property by the very government under which she had sought protection. Both her own and her husband's families had vanished; she had neither son nor grandson upon whom to lean; her household consisted entirely of "elegant females" as dependent as herself. As for earning a livelihood, pride forbade what incompetence had already made impossible. To poverty and age were superadded the anxieties connected with the affairs of her unlucky spouse, whose old debts oppressed and distracted her timid nature. In a kind of financial nightmare long-forgotten creditors pounced ghoulishly upon her and pursued her endlessly from court to court. It is some comfort to know that in most cases she was able to escape their clutches.¹

But there was a brighter side to the picture. Her own family connections did not entirely desert her. Among the exiles in London was a kindly cousin, Joseph Royall, "late of

¹ E.g. *Procter v. Vassall* (1794), on her notes made in 1767-68. Verdict for defendant with costs, affirmed on appeal. (No. 106852, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.) She was also sued on her own more recent notes by John Semple of Glasgow (1786), William Mackay of Boston (1788), etc. A quaint official testimony to her poverty is seen in the sheriff's returns on these writs, the usual article attached being "a chair, the property of the defent."

Jamaica.”¹ By some unexplained good fortune he had been able to retain from the spoilers more than twenty-five acres of land in Dorchester and Milton, with house, barn, etc. These, in 1782, he conveyed to her, “in consideration of the affection I bear my cousin Penelope Vassall of Boston, widow, and for five shillings.” She in turn sold them in various parcels as fast as she could, eking out on the proceeds her dreary existence.²

Her greatest benefactor of all was her nephew by marriage, Thomas Oliver, now of Bristol, England, a generous little gentleman who had proved a true friend in need to more than one of his former neighbors in Cambridge. His family estates in Antigua adjoined those of the Royalls, and although Mrs. Vassall’s depreciated share of the latter plantation was in the hands of creditors, he was evidently convinced by practical experience that the place was capable of successful rehabilitation. As a trustee³ for the Widow, therefore, he seems to have undertaken the redemption of the property, gradually paying off the debts with which it was burdened, and (aided by a general improvement of local conditions) bringing it to such a pitch of efficiency that by 1791 her interest in it was valued at £5167. At that date he took a formal lease from her for nine years at £350 per annum, and in 1795, all the encumbrances having been cleared up, he received a conveyance, presumably by way of mortgage.⁴ Although it is pretty certain that the greater part of the actual proceeds of these transactions had already been advanced to Penelope in a long series of anticipatory loans, which had kept her from starvation for years past, yet there is reason to believe that, thanks to the warm-hearted ex-lieutenant-governor, the close of her life was blessed with something resembling an income, a

¹ 1778. Harris, “The New England Royalls,” *N. E. Hist. Gen. Register*, xxxix, 354, n.

² Suffolk Deeds, *passim*.

³ See page 39. Oliver was noted for his success as a planter.

⁴ Antigua Records, Lib. V, vol. 5, fol. 86, and Lib. O, vol. 7, fol. 87. His lease of Mrs. Vassall’s half was simultaneous with a purchase of Isaac Royall’s, containing about sixty acres and forty slaves. (*Idem*, Lib. W, vol. 5, fol. 222.) The supposition of a mortgage is necessary in view of the fact that after Mrs. Vassall’s death her heirs sold the same property to him outright (1806) for about £6000. (*Idem*, Lib. F, vol. 7, fol. 203.) He thus became owner of the entire Royall plantation.

Cambridge December 21: 1767

I the Subscriber Do hereby promise to pay
or Cause to be payed unto Elizabeth Hughes or
Order the Sum of twenty Six pounds thirteen
Shillings & four pence & awful money upon
Demand it being for the same Value Reserved
by me as witness my hand Penelope Vassall

PENELOPE VASSALL'S WRITING

(Actual size)

See page 40. n.

luxury to which she had been unaccustomed for almost thirty years.¹

At last, as the new century dawned, her poor shadow faded from the scene, after seventy-six years in a world wherein she had found that wealth and beauty and happiness are but shadows too. She was buried beside her husband, one dark November day² of 1800, in the tomb he built beneath Christ Church. By her will,³ feebly scrawled on a bit of note-paper, she left all her estate "in possession, remainder or reversion whether in the United States or the Island of Antigua," to her "only child Elizabeth Russell of Boston, widow," and appointed her as administratrix. But two years later, before the estate had been closed, Mrs. Russell was laid beside her parents,⁴ and the lingering possibility that the old Vassall homestead might welcome back its rightful occupants was gone forever.

IV

No mention of Henry Vassall or of his tomb would be complete without some account of his slaves, Anthony, or "Tony," the father and "Darby" the son, already alluded to. Their position in Cambridge annals is unique. They afford our only instance of well-authenticated cases illustrating the fortunes of ex-slaves of the "George Washington's body-servant" type. Tony's indeterminate, serio-comic rôle during the Revolution — half chat-

¹ In 1794, for example, she was able to turn the tables of the law by suing George Bacon of Stockbridge for a loan to him of £12. No. 98194, "Early Court Files," Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

² She died on the 19th. Harris, "The New England Royalls," *N. E. Hist. Gen. Register*, xxxix, 353.

³ Suffolk Probate, No. 21362.

⁴ Mrs. Russell left no will and apparently no property save the Antigua interests. Just what these amounted to is hard to say. For several years after her death they were so little considered that it was not thought worth while even to settle her estate. Then, as has been noted, they were sold by her daughters to Oliver, nominally for £6000. Probably to satisfy the conveyancers, administration was taken out in 1807, but the papers were so carelessly drawn that one cannot but feel they represented very little. Some of the printed forms are of the wrong kind, others are erroneously indorsed, and Penelope Vassall is described throughout as intestate. (Suffolk Probate, Nos. 21362 and 23010.) The bonds were set at \$20,000. If this sum, according to the usual rule, was twice the value of the estate, we may infer the latter was not more than about £2000, which figure may have represented the actual amount paid (or already advanced) by Oliver.

tel, half independent wage-earner, now quasi-foundling and pauper, now high financier — quaintly suggests the political and civic no-man's-land through which, lacking the short cut of an authoritative *pronunciamento*,¹ the negroes of New England passed on their way from servitude to citizenship. Darby, on the other hand, surviving far into the nineteenth century and within living memory, forms as it were an ebon link connecting the heroic and the modern periods of the town history. Father and son together have earned our gratitude, too, for perpetuating between them most of the scanty traditions of their "family" that we still possess.

Tony, according to these traditions,² was shanghaied from Spain at an early age, with the lure of "seeing the world." The particular portion of the universe exhibited to him was the island of Jamaica. Here he was bought for a coachman by young Harry Vassall, and his travels were soon extended to Cambridge. Like master, like man. When the Colonel married Penelope Royall, his coachman espoused her maid "Coby,"³ or Cuba (said, in spite of her name, to have been a full-blooded African), and the happy pair brought up a numerous family.⁴

How many compatriots they had in the Vassall household during its heyday is uncertain. The Colonel unquestionably brought other slaves with him from Jamaica besides Tony. A number were contributed by Mrs. Vassall as a part of her dowry. The

¹ The Massachusetts legislators could never quite screw up their courage to the point of emancipating the slaves within their jurisdiction. The subject was debated "for many years" without result; and even in 1777, when the country was ringing with the battle-cry of freedom, and the negroes themselves were petitioning earnestly for recognition, a bill for that purpose was tabled on the second reading, while a letter to Congress was prepared. With a sorry mixture of timidity and arrogance it stated that the delay was due to a fear that action by Massachusetts might have too "extensive influence" on "our Brethren in the other Colonies." The letter itself was tabled, and nothing more was done. Mass. Archives, 197/125. *Historic Magazine, Second Series*, v, 52.

² See a manuscript note, apparently taken down by Rev. Dr. Hoppin from the statements of Darby about 1855, preserved in the papers of Christ Church.

³ Old Isaac Royall by his will in 1738 had bequeathed to his daughter "one Negro Girl called Present and one Negro Woman called Abba & her Six Children named Robin Coby Walker Nuba Trace & Tobey to hold to my Said Daughter & her Heirs forever [!]." Middlesex Probate, 19545, O.S.

⁴ Several of them can be seen on the inventory of 1769. It is amusing to notice that according to cash values therein Tony was scarcely half the man his wife was. See Appendix A.

names of nearly a score are scattered under various dates through the scanty manuscripts mentioning such matters. Added to the similar establishments of the other rich West India planters of the town, they gave pre-revolutionary Cambridge the strange notability of a black population nearly three times greater than that of any other place with less than 2000 inhabitants in the whole province.¹ In some of these establishments they were so numerous that, as at the Royalls, they had separate "quarters," after the Southern custom. In others, as (traditionally) at the Borlands, they occupied an extra story of the main house. In many churches they were given a special gallery; but just what was done with them at Christ Church, which had no galleries, and where they must have been particularly in evidence, is not clear.² On a list³ of the families of that parish, drawn up by the rector in 1763, Colonel Vassall is put down for ten persons. Since himself, his wife, and Miss Elizabeth account for only three, we conclude that even at this date, when his fortunes were on the wane, he had at least seven servants worth mentioning in such a connection. And since the expense book already quoted gives no clue to any servant receiving regular wages, we may further conclude that all seven were slaves.

¹ The special census in 1754 of "Slaves of 16 Years and over," and the "lost" general census of 1765, recently rediscovered by Benton, yield the following comparisons for the towns nearest to Cambridge in size:

Order in Population	1754 Slaves	1765	
		Negroes	Total
36th. Sudbury	14	27	1772
37th. Harwich	14	23	1772
38th. Attleboro'	10	15	1739
39th. Cambridge	56	90	1582
40th. Concord	15	27	1564
41st. Boxford	8	17	1550
42nd. Reading	20	34	1537

A striking exception, due of course to the same causes, is found in the little hamlets of

Lexington	24	44	912
Medford	34	47	790

² Some of the largest slaveholders — Borland, Phips, John Vassall — had two pews each, and, as many of the side pews were never bought, there would be plenty of room for such other slaves as actually attended; but the religious instruction of their servants was scarcely a strong point with the easy-going proprietors of "Church Row."

³ Perry, *Papers Relating to the Church in Massachusetts*, 502.

The sable brethren, despite their lowly status, occupy a prominent place in the above expense book. The daily marketing and "sundrys," it appears, were usually intrusted to "Tony," "Jack," or "Jemmy"¹ — sometimes to "Merryfield." Then there were "leather breeches for Jemmy £7;" and for his more expansive father, "pd. Hall for toneys breeches £8.5." There are also such items as "pd. peak² for Nursing Cuba £6;" and on Christmas Day, "given servants £5.12.6."

Entries like these are characteristic of the kindly and paternal relations that almost always mitigated the conditions of slavery in New England. The indefensible ethics of the system were practically obscured by the simple-hearted friendliness that made the Africans well-nigh members of the family.³ In many households they even ate at their master's table. Indeed William Vassall, the Colonel's brother, who owned swarms of negroes in Jamaica, had "scruples" as to retaining them in bondage at all. He actually consulted Bishop Butler on the question, but decided — doubtless with considerable relief — to make no change when that famous casuist reassured him "on Scripture ground."⁴

Strict historical impartiality compels the admission that there was another side to the shield. In base return for their humane treatment the slaves sometimes displayed rank ingratitude and treachery. Morally and intellectually they were for the most part mere children, and occasionally exceedingly naughty children. The court records⁵ give us a shocking instance of perversity in the Vassall household itself — a crime as black as the perpetrators.

¹ Son of Tony and older brother of Darby.

² Cf. the entry in the interleaved almanac of Rev. Andrew Eliot of Boston: "1744, Mar. 14 Mary Peake came to nurse our Child at 18/ 3^d week."

³ Cf. the numerous entries regarding the death of "Negro George," one of Isaac Royall's slaves. E.g., "1776 March, To the Sexton & Bearers for negro Georges Funeral 15/7; To time in Apprizing George's Cloathes & takg Care of them 3/—" Middlesex Probate, 19546, Old Series.

⁴ Dexter to Belknap. *Belknap Papers*, ii, 384. See also the working-over of this famous section of the Belknap correspondence by such authorities as G. H. Moore, *History of Slavery in Massachusetts*, and E. Washburn, *Mass. Hist. Soc. Collections*, 4th Series, iv, 333, and *Lectures on Early Massachusetts History*, 193.

⁵ No. 69278, "Early Court Files," Middlesex "Minute Book" 1752-56, and Records, Superiour Court of Judicature, vol. "1752-53" fol. 126, all in Clerk's Office, Supreme Judicial Court, Boston.

The Jurors for the said Lord ye King Upon Their Oath Present That William Heley of Cambridge in the County aforesaid Laborer and Robbin¹ of Cambridge aforesd Laborer and Servant of Henry Vassell of Cambridge aforesd Esqr. did on ye Ninth of May last at Cambridge aforesaid With force and Armes Brake & Enter the Dwelling house in Cambridge aforesd of William Brattle Esq. and with force as aforesd feloniously Take Steal & Carry away Out of ye Same house An Iron Chest and the Money Goods and Chattels hereafter mentioned then in the Same Chest being, namely, Six hundred and three Spanish Milld Dollars, one half of a Dollar and one Eighth of a Dollar, One hundred and Seventy Pieces of Eight, One Large Silver Cup, Two Silver Chafing dishes, One Silver Sauce Pan, Three Silver Tankards, Nine Silver Porringers, thirteen Large Silver Spoons, One Silver Punch Ladle, Twelve Silver Tea Spoons, One pair of Silver Tea tongs One Silver Pepper Box, four Silver Salt Salvers, One Large Silver Plate, Two Silver Canns, Two Silver Candle-Sticks One pair of Silver Snuffers and Snuff Dish two Silver Sweet Meat Spoons, One Silver Spout Cup, One Hundred and thirty three Small Pieces of Silver Coin Two hundred and Eighty Six Copper half pence, & Eight Small Bags being the Goods and Chattels of the said William Brattle and altogether of ye Value of three hundred and fifty pounds Lawful money against the Peace of ye said Lord the King and the Law of this Province in that Case made and Provided.

EDMD TROWBRIDGE, *Attr Dom Rez.*

[*Endorsed*]

This is a True Bill

EPHRAIM JONES *foreman.*

To this Indictment the said William Heley & Robin severally plead guilty

Attr SAML WINTHROP *Cler.*

Robbin Negro on his Examination Taken This 19th of May AD 1752 before Saml Danforth & E. Trowbridge Esqrs. Says That Last Saturday was Seven night abt. Two of ye Clock in ye night Wm. Healy & I were Concern'd in Stealing ye Chest of Silver some Time Since sd Healey Told me that it was a good Time to get into Coll. Brattles House & Get Something. I told him I was afraid by reason of ye Small Pox he thereupon Told me That he would go into ye house if I would go along with him & I agreeing to it he in ye sd. Saturday Night Came & Awaked me out of my Sleep & we went to Coll Brattles house & he Went into Coll. Brattles Barn & Got a Ladder

¹ Brother of Cuba. See note, page 62.

& Set up agt ye Back of Ye house & Got into ye Back Window and Got Out ye Chest let it down on ye Roof of ye Studdy and delivered it to me on ye Ladder & I held it there Until he got down & then we Carried it Out of ye Gate & Thence Thro' my master Garden into ye Cornfield & there we got an ax (which I Fetch) & he Opend it & I went away for fear of ye Small Pox & when it was Open'd He Took ye Money Out of ye Chest & then Berried ye Chest in ye field where it lay with ye Plate in it Until ye next Monday Night When we Took ye Plate out & Carried ye Chest away & Berried it in a Ditch in Mr Elleries land & we hid both ye money & plate Under My Masters Barn where it was found. Dick Brattle gave in ye first Information Concerning ye money he Said That there was an Iron Chest in ye Closet in his Masters Chamber yt he Supposed was half full of Money & yt if Wm. Healey Could Carry him off he Could Get him money Enough This Was Soon after Wm. Came to live at my Masters, . . . We Told Toney of it & he Crept Under Ye Barn Flower to hide ye money ye Next Morning after we Stole it but he never had any part of it as I know of but had ye promise of part of it. I took ye money This day & put it in ye place whence I Fetched it & that is ye Same money we Took Out of ye Chest we Took Everything Out of ye Chest but some papers Wm Heley proposed (that when we were ready to go off) to Take My Masters plate but I told him it would not do. No other persons were knowing of ye affair.

Wm. Heley Says That Dick Brattle Told Robbin where his Masters Gold & Silver was & yt his Masters daughter was agoing to be married & if they did not get it Soon it would not be Worth While to meddle With it dick Said there was a Vast deal of Gold & A great Many Rings in a Box in his Misters Chamber yt stood on a desk there & that there was an Iron Chest in ye Closett that was half full of Dollars & Carried Robbin to see ye Chest yt if they were Enoculated he Robin might get it. Last Saturday Night was seven Night Robin & I went into Coll Brattles he went in to ye Barn & got a ladder & set up agt ye Back Side of ye house & opened ye Chamber window got in & Took Out ye Iron Chest & let it down on ye ladder Robbin bought 3 pair of stockins & Two handkerchief with part of ye money one of which Joseph Luke had & also two of ye Dollars Robbin & Toney hid ye Money ye next morning. Robin Opend ye Chest & Took Out ye Money & left ye Plate in ye Chest which he Buried in ye Field, Joseph Luke was knowing of ye design of Stealing ye money abt 3 weeks Since & it was Agreed That Dick Should have half & ye Other was to be divided between Luke Robin & myself Luke was not present when the money was Stole, but Come afterwards & de-

manded his part and Said ye reason he did not help was because he was drunk Robbin & I were with Luke yt Evening before ye money was Stole & drank togeather in Mr. Reed's Yard. I stood by Coll Brattles dore & by ye Gate (while Robbin was entring ye house) to Watch & See that he was not discovered & yt no One was a Comeing.

I took ye Dollars that Were found on me Out of a napkin in Mr. Vassells Little house where there was also Some Coppers yt Toney Brought from Boston in Exchange for Some of ye Dollars yt were stole. The Dollars found on me are part of Coll. Brattles as I suppose & Believe for Robbin Told me he had sent some down by Toney & He Told me he put them in ye napkin & were part of Coll Brattles The Coppers you have are my own & also One of ye Dollars. Our design was to go to Cape Breton & from thence to France.

At his Majesty's superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize and general goal Delivery begun & held at Concord . . . 4 August 1752 . . .

The Court having considered the Offence of the said Wm Heley and Robin, order that each of them be whipt twenty Stripes upon his naked back at the public whipping, and that they pay the sd Wm Brattle tribble the value of the Goods stolen (the tribble being £786) the goods return'd (being of the value of £214) to be accounted part; and that they pay costs of prosecution standing committed until this Sentence be perform'd.

N.B. in Case the sd Wm Heley & Robin be unable to make restitution or pay the tribble Damages ordered that the sd Wm Brattle be & hereby is impower'd to dispose of the sd Wm Heley in Service to any of his Majesty's Subjects for the Term of twenty years, and to dispose of the sd Robin for the Term of his natural Life.

Since nothing more is heard of either of the culprits it is to be supposed that this harsh sentence¹ was duly carried out, and that Henry Vassall was thus deprived of another portion of his fast-disappearing property.

Tony himself, although he plainly hovered on the outskirts of the crime as a willing accessory, seems to have been able to clear his reputation and to maintain his confidential relations with his master. The tie between them was apparently one of real affec-

¹ Cf. the even more terrible punishment, three years later, of two negroes who had poisoned their master, and who were executed on Cambridge Common: "Mark, a fellow about 30, was hanged; and Phillis, an old creature, was burnt to death." Winthrop's Diary, September 18, 1755, quoted in Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 217.

tion. They had been together nearly all their lives, and it needs but a modicum of imagination to fancy the escapades, equine and otherwise, to which the old coachman had been privy. Though the Colonel, as we have seen, probably sold off several of his slaves during the financial stresses of his later years, yet he steadfastly refused to part with Tony. So too Madame Vassall after his death. In her attempts to clear the estate from debts she even sold Cuba and the children ¹ to young John Vassall across the road (though the actual transfer could have been scarcely more than nominal), but kept Tony on the old place.²

In return the slave exhibited a Casabianca-like fidelity. It is not unlikely that when both Vassall families retreated from Cambridge he was left in charge of the combined properties.³ At all events he hung about the homestead during the eclipse of its former splendor like a kind of dusky human penumbra. His shadowy presence haunts the Burgoyne dinner traditions ⁴ and

¹ As late as a generation ago there was said to be "documentary evidence" that in 1722 she showed her "kindness" by paying £20 to free one of Tony's children from slavery. (*The Cambridge of 1776*, 100.) Since the date is obviously wrong — it should probably be 1772 — we may suspect a further confusion in the statement and assume that under the circumstances the payment was made not by, but to her, and that her object was not so much altruistic as to raise much needed funds.

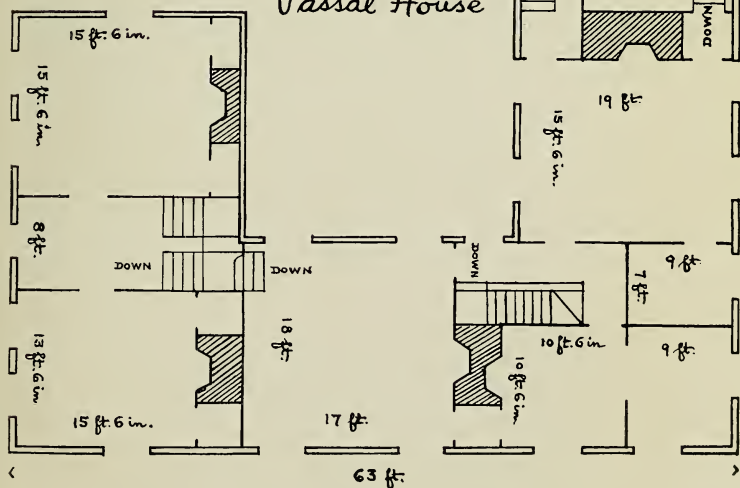
Although even in the forced settlement of estates the slaves of New England were generally treated with consideration, a shocking instance of the opposite sort is found in the letters of the Rev. Winwood Serjeant. After the death of his father-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Browne of Portsmouth, N. H., the latter's old serving-man "Jess [Jesse]" was sold to a planter in the West Indies in 1774. In a frenzy of despair at the separation from all his lifelong associations, the poor creature threw himself overboard on the voyage and perished miserably.

² Where he duly appears, *solus*, on the inventory of 1778. (See Appendix B.) It is instructive to notice that he is now entered somewhat hesitatingly as a "negro man," not as a slave, and has no appraised money value as a chattel. Neither does he figure on the actual sale-list of the ensuing auction. Plainly public opinion was setting in the opposite direction. (See note, page 70.)

³ In August, 1775, a committee appointed to take charge of "such Estates only as may be found without Occupant or possessor," reported that "many of them who are left in possession under pretence of occupants are only negroes or servants &c and that in some instances the Officers Doctors and others belonging to the army have entered upon & taken possession & make waste on sd Estates." (Mass. Archives, 154/30.) The language here points unmistakably to the Vassall houses, one of which was now in full swing as a hospital and the other as military headquarters.

⁴ See *post*.

Second Story Vassal House



FROM AN OLD PLAN

See page 13

appears sharply silhouetted on the inventory of 1778.¹ We also glimpse him at work on the confiscated estate of his mistress's brother at Medford — work which, in his new status of a paid hand, he seems to have valued more highly than his employer did.²

"Antony Vassall — 1" is entered, along with "Cato Boardman — 1," on the list of polls in Cambridge for 1777, but is taxed for neither personalty nor realty. The exemption he had cleverly secured by taking up his domicile with his wife and children, who "inhabited a small tenement on Mr. John Vassall's estate and improved a little spot of land of about one and a half acres lying adjacent,"³ and thus contriving to enjoy a freedom from rents and taxes as well as from bondage.⁴ When in 1781 the final sale of all confiscated Loyalist property was arranged, he beheld with dismay the vanishing of his peculiar privileges, but determined to take advantage of the anomalous conditions to secure if possible a free title to his diminutive domain. Like any other full-fledged citizen,⁵ therefore, he petitioned the Legis-

¹ See Appendix B.

² The accounts of Simon Tufts, "Agent for Isaac Royall, Absentee," include:

1776 Dec. 10 To Toney Mrs. Vassalls Negro	£4.
1777 Jan. 17 To Toney Vassall	4.
Apr. 15 To Toney Vassall's Ballance	1.12.
Jul. 28 To Toney Vassall's full Ballance by Arbitration	0.6.6

³ "Memorial of Anthony Vassall of Cambridge, a negro man," to the Massachusetts Legislature, 1781. (Mass. Archives, 231/114-15.) The location was evidently "The Farm House East of the Garden," with one and one-half acres and 22 rods, valued in the inventory of 1778 at £243. (Middlesex Probate, 23340, O.S.) On this inventory Cuba and little Darby are plainly identified as "one negro woman of about 40 years of age, one negro boy about 8 years," together with the most recent arrival of all, "another negro child about three months." On reconsideration this last item was struck through with the pen. The above are the only entries of the kind. No values are set against them. (Cf. note, page 68.)

⁴ Furthermore, he undoubtedly managed to benefit by the kindly action of the House of Representatives, which, considering that several refugees "have left behind them some of their Families who through Age, Infirmary or other Circumstances are unable to provide for their own Support," resolved "to grant a reasonable Allowance towards the Support & Maintenance of Persons in such Circumstances," and to pay "such reasonable Charges as may have arisen for boarding & supporting such Persons since the Departure of the aforesaid Refugees." (November, 1776.) Mass. Archives, 154/73.

⁵ Slavery in Massachusetts, impliedly done away with by the Bill of Rights, received its *coup de grace* in 1781 by the decision in the case of "Quork"

lature — having “a large family of children to maintain, and being an old man, and his wife, who was of great help to him, being sick” — to have his squatter’s rights confirmed by a good title from the state. The friendly hand that drafted the memorial (Tony’s own chirographical powers were limited to making his mark — a bold and handsome capital “T”) added, not without effect, “that though dwelling in a land of freedom, both himself and his wife have spent almost sixty years of their lives in slavery, and that though deprived of what now makes them happy beyond expression yet they have ever lived a life of honesty and been faithful in their master’s service,” and expressed the hope “that they shall not be denied the sweets of freedom the remainder of their days by being reduced to the painful necessity of begging for bread.” On this quaint appeal the good-natured law-makers, perhaps further influenced by the above delicate suggestion that the petitioners otherwise might “come on the town,” compromised by ordering that out of the proceeds of the John Vassall sales Tony should be paid the sum of £12, and the same amount annually thereafter from the public funds.¹

Had we not other proofs that Tony Vassall had absorbed no

Walker v. Jennison. One of the earlier decisions leading up to this conclusion, it may be of interest to recall, was a test case (Quincy’s Reports, 29 *et seq.*) over another Cambridge slave, “James” Lechmere, undoubtedly a friend of Tony’s. Public opinion in New England, long somnolent on the whole subject because of its easy conditions, became aroused during the mid-century; and thereafter, John Adams declares, he never knew a jury render a verdict to the effect that a man was a slave. He cynically adds, however, that the motives for such sentiments were the very reverse of exalted, being, to wit, the selfish opposition of the laboring whites, who, as their numbers increased, determined to oust their unpaid competitors. (*Belknap Papers*, ii, 401. See also Washburn and Moore, already cited, page 64.) As early as 1763, Governor Bernard wrote to the Lords of Trade: “The People here are very much tired of Negro Servants; and It is generally thought that it would be for the public good to discourage their importation, if it was not at present very inconsiderable.” Benton, *Early Census Making in Massachusetts*, 55.

¹ *Mass. Resolves*, 1781, January Session, chap. lxxxi. Such petitions were not uncommon. An extraordinarily flowery appeal from one of Isaac Royall’s slaves, “Belinda,” born on the Rio da Valtá, Africa, received equally favorable action in 1783. (Mass. Archives, 239/12.) This dusky beldame seems to have been a rather notorious source of anxiety to her owner, for in his will he bequeathed to his daughter “my Negro Woman Belinda in case she does not choose her Freedom; if she does choose her Freedom to have it provided she get security that she shall not be a charge to the Town of Medford.” Suffolk Probate, 85/535. See note, page 71.

small share of his former master's financial adroitness, we should be surprised to find that, after such a pitiable account of his poverty, and having failed in his ingenious attempt to acquire a home at the public expense, he was able to secure one in the usual manner from his own private means. In 1787 he bought a house and a quarter of an acre of land ¹ from Aaron Hill, bricklayer, and four years later a small tract adjoining. In 1793 he acquired from John Foxcroft nearly five acres ² on the other side of the road (Massachusetts Avenue). His total outlay for these purchases was no less than £152.

The source of this unexpected wealth is one of the most amazing bits of his history. As has been said, he lived during the Revolutionary period with his wife and children on the land of John Vassall, whose property they were. As long as it was possible so to do, he insisted that the cost of their maintenance should stand on the same footing with any other outlays for preserving the confiscated personalty until it should be sold. Of the correctness of this he actually succeeded in convincing the "agent," Farrington, on whose accounts appears the extraordinary entry:

P^d Anthony Vassall for supporting a Negro woman & two Children (3 Years,) belonging to the Estate of s^d [John] Vassall £222.³

Cambridge therefore may boast the singular distinction of having possessed a reputable resident who, with neither resources nor backers, achieved by perfectly legal means the supposedly impossible feat of having his cake and eating it too, — enjoying for a period of years a commodious dwelling, a garden lot, a devoted spouse, and a family establishment, which not only cost him nothing, but finally netted him a handsome surplus and a government pension.

¹ Middlesex Deeds, 96/84. The title shows that this was the plot formerly owned by Benjamin Cragbone, tanner, who built thereon, about 1766, one of those "little black story and a half houses with gambrel roofs, that saw the row that was going on the 19th of April, '75." (John Holmes, "A Cambridge Robinson Crusoe," in *The City and the Sea*, 20.) The location was near the corner of the present Massachusetts Avenue and Shepard Street. (*The Cambridge of 1776*, 100. See also Paige, *History of Cambridge*, 519.)

² Middlesex Deeds, 105/274 and 110/199.

³ Middlesex Probate, No. 23340, O.S. The transaction was probably modelled on the similar charge by the executor of Isaac Royall "for Supporting Belinda his aged Negro Servant for 3 Years, £30," but, it will be noted, on an enormously inflated capitalization.

On his own manor thus ludicrously procured, with his truly valuable helpmeet, "two pigs, a horse, cart and tackling, a boat-hook, etc.,"¹ the old Loyalist coachman dwelt for some thirty years, plying the trade of a "farrier"² in an intermittent and desultory fashion which he more than atoned for by the admirable regularity with which he drew his pension. The following pastoral document³ gives a good example of his craft. That word, indeed, may be taken with a double meaning, since we have here additional evidence that Tony's commercial methods were of the most advanced order and included the thoroughly modern system of overcharging for everything.

Will ^m Winthrop Esq ^r	
th 1791 To Antony Vafsall	Dr
To keep ^s Your Horfe on hay from	
th 10 Nov ^r to th 13 Jan ^r 1792 being	
63 days at 1/6 ^p day	4.14.6
To triming said Horfe	3.
Docking s ^d Horfe	1.6
	<hr/> £4.19.0

after mature Confideration of the above
Acct it appears to me that there is due
to Antony Vafsall £2.10.6

EBEN^s STEDMAN

[Endorsed]

Tony Vafsall's Acco^t
p^d Jan. 12, 1793

January 12 1793 Rec^d payment
of the within Acco^t which is
in full of all debts dues and
demands whatever

his
ANTONY T VASSALL
mark

Test.

JNO. ALFORD MASON

¹ Inventory of 1811. Middlesex Probate, No. 23335, Old Series.

² He is designated in the records both as "farrier" and as "labourer," and in one case (probably most to his liking) receives the sonorous appellation of "yeoman."

³ Preserved in a scrap-book at the Cambridge Public Library.

Like most of his race, Tony was never averse to abandoning the grosser forms of toil for the fine art of conversation; and he delighted to expound to the younger generation the glories of the good old times before the war. He was famous for his grandiloquent descriptions of the ancient splendors of "the family" and his own Apollo-like magnificence on the box seat of the chariot when they drove to church on Sundays or into Boston for some stately function. Such reminiscences were of course strongly colored by the native foibles of the narrator; it is doubtless, for example, due to his vivid African imagination that the old Vassall house for generations afterwards enjoyed the reputation of being "ha'nted."¹

In September of 1811, at a fabulous age,² Anthony Vassall shuffled off this earthly stage, leaving the faithful Cuba as his chief mourner.³ Her tears, nevertheless, were not so blinding as to make her lose sight of the "pension." Since by its terms it was not payable to her, she lost no time in applying afresh to the Great and General Court, "at a very advanced period of life and destitute of other regular means of support," praying the legislators "to take pity on her humble state, and seeing the premises, to grant the continuance of the said pension of £12 during the remnant of her life." To enforce her claim she piquantly pointed out that the original annuity was to be paid out of the proceeds of the estate of John Vassall, "on her your petitioner's account, and for her support; as she was, prior to the Revolution, and at the time of the confiscation, the

¹ *The Cambridge of 1776*, 100. Such stories naturally lost nothing in the lively fancies of the many young folks who subsequently occupied the mansion. Persons now living can testify to mysterious nocturnal rustlings in the great chamber where Church was confined (see *post*); the negro boy who was pricked to death by Burgoyne's officers (see *post*) "walked" in one of the attic rooms; the ghost of old Governor Belcher (the owner from 1717 to 1719) could be heard tiptoeing along the halls in his squeaky riding-boots; on stormy nights the balls of spectral skittle-players reverberated along the roof.

² Given in *Cambridge Vital Records*, ii, 772, as ninety-eight.

³ Middlesex Probate, No. 23335, O.S. At or soon after this date his heirs seem to have been his daughter Catherine (evidently named for his former master's granddaughter, Miss Russell); Abigail (Hill), widow of James or "Jemmy"; Eliza Flagg, daughter of Cyrus; Flora, widow of "Bristol" Miranda (compare the John Miranda mentioned in Paige, 450); and Darby, described as "the only son." Dorinda, mentioned in the inventory of 1769, had died in 1784. *Cambridge Vital Records*, ii, 772.

domestic slave and dependent of the said John Vassall, and her said husband was not." Through the good offices of Lemuel Shaw, the Legislature resolved to accede to her request and continue her little dole, now represented by \$40, "until further order of this Court."¹ The last clause evinced an almost needless precaution. The old crone claimed her pittance but one year more.²

Darby, the best remembered child of the couple, was born, if his own statement³ is to be relied on, in May of 1769, beneath the roof of John Vassall, who had already purchased the mother Cuba, and thus become entitled to her offspring. At a tender age he was "given" to George Reed of South Woburn, a recent convert to Episcopalianism and one of the group who from that distant township occasionally attended Christ Church, Cambridge.⁴ That worthy patriot, when the Revolution broke out, threw to the winds his half-assimilated Church of England principles, joined the provincial forces, marched to Bunker Hill, was there stricken by "a surfeit or heat," and in a few days expired.⁵

¹ Mass. Resolves of 1811-12, chap. cliv, and accompanying papers: "Petition of Cuby Vassall," approved Feb. 28, 1812 by her fellow-townsmen Gov. Gerry. See Judge Shaw's reminiscences of the matter in *Mass. Hist. Society's Proceedings, 1st Series*, iv, 66.

² Her age is given as seventy-eight. As in her husband's case, consumption was the immediate cause of death. (*Cambridge Vital Records*, ii, 772.) Both were buried from the First Parish, of which they were doubtless members, Christ Church at this period being closed.

³ Hoppin MS. (see note, page 62). Cf. Darby's own deposition in Suffolk Deeds, 387/122.

⁴ See Sewall, *History of Woburn*, 500. The Reeds were considerable slaveholders (Johnson, *Woburn Deaths*, 154) and made a specialty of getting their stock very young. In a case parallel to Darby's, "Venus" was given to Swithin Reed while she was so tiny that she was brought from Boston in a saddlebag. (Curtis, *Ye Olde Meeting House*, 61.) A "nigger baby" in fact, among the well-to-do of those days, was a favorite and frequent gift. Many slaveholders regarded their property's offspring as troublesome incumbrances and "gave them away like puppies," or, in default of ready recipients, advertised them with a cash bonus to the taker. (Moore, *History of Slavery in Mass.*, 57, quoting Belknap. See also Washburn, *ubi supra*, 216.) As late as 1779 "Cato," son of "Violct," was sold at the age of six. See Littleton v. Tuttle, a note to the case of Winchendon v. Hatfield (4 *Mass. Reports*, 128), relating to the fortunes of "Edom London," who in nineteen years changed masters no less than eleven times, besides twice enlisting in the Continental Army.

⁵ Sewall, *History of Woburn*, 573, n.

Little Darby thereupon wandered back to Cambridge, only to find his first master as effectually beyond recall as his second. To fill the gap a third was unexpectedly offered in no less a personage than George Washington himself. For when the General arrived at his permanent headquarters in the abandoned John Vassall house, he found the youngster (so the story runs) disconsolately swinging on the gate. The Virginia planter, who had handled slaves all his life, good-naturedly proposed to take the boy into his service. What must have been his astonishment when the pickaninny coolly inquired as to the rate of compensation. Such a left-handed manifestation of the new and much vaunted "spirit of liberty" was not at all to the taste of the Commander-in-chief, and his emphatic remarks on the subject caused Darby Vassall to declare to the day of his death that "General Washington was no gentleman, to expect a boy to work without wages."¹

Further details of his youthful days are lacking, except his own statement that he was brought up a Congregationalist — not surprising in view of the almost total extinction of the doctrines of England, religious as well as political, in his neighborhood. Following the general seaward migration of the negroes after the Revolution, he left his parents in Cambridge and drifted into Boston. In the metropolis he soon did sufficiently well to buy, with his brother Cyrus, a little house on May Street.² He married Lucy Holland in 1802, and had several children.³ Inheriting, as it were, a certain gentility in his humble station, he was employed by some of the best old families of Boston — the Shaws, the Curtises, etc. — and plainly won their friendship and esteem.⁴ His prosperity enabled him, after the death of his father Tony, to buy out the interests of all the other heirs to the Cambridge

¹ *New England Hist. Gen. Register*, xxv, 44, where by obvious error the anecdote is assigned to old Tony.

² 1796. *Suffolk Deeds*, 183/79 *et passim*. He is therein described as a "laborer." His other brother, James, meantime became a "hairdresser." May Street is now Revere Street.

³ Harris, *Vassals of New England*, 13, n. *Boston Birth Records*, 1810-1849, *passim*.

⁴ In 1824 he was living in the household of the wealthy Samuel Brown of Boston, who had evidently befriended him for years, and who by will not only left him wearing apparel, fuel and provisions, but also released him from a mortgage of two thousand dollars on the May Street property, given in 1807 to cover the expense of erecting a "New Brick mansion house" thereon. *Suffolk Probate*, 123/615. *Suffolk Deeds*, 220/276.

property, at a cost of \$620,¹ and in 1827 to build another house on the land.²

The death of his wife the following year probably marks the turning of his good fortune's tide. One by one, also, his children dropped away, in almost every case from consumption. Brother Cyrus had long ago passed over Jordan.³ As old age crept on, Darby fell upon evil times, was forced first to mortgage and then to sell his little freeholds,⁴ and finally to resort to the charity of the Brattle Square Church in Boston, of which he had long been a member. There he became a picturesque and rather noted figure. Scrupulously observing the conventions of the olden time, Sunday by Sunday he toiled up to the abandoned slaves' gallery, or "nigger loft," over the organ, until his pathetic solitude proved too much for the tender-hearted pastor, Dr. Lothrop, and he was given a comfortable seat near the pulpit. His greatest pleasure was a formal call upon the minister, who always received him as deferentially as if he had been a stranger of distinction.⁵

The old fellow's most cherished possession was what he termed his "pass," dated 1843 and signed by Miss Catherine Russell,⁶ the granddaughter of Henry Vassall. This grisly document, which would have delighted the heart of "Old Mortality," guaranteed him admission to no worldly dignity or mundane privilege, but to a place after death in the vault beside the mouldering bones of the proud old "family" of which he still counted himself a member. He would frequently make a Sunday pilgrimage to Christ Church to assure himself that his precious prospective domicile was *in statu quo*, and when present he always attended the Com-

¹ December 24, 1813. Middlesex Probate, 23335, Old Series.

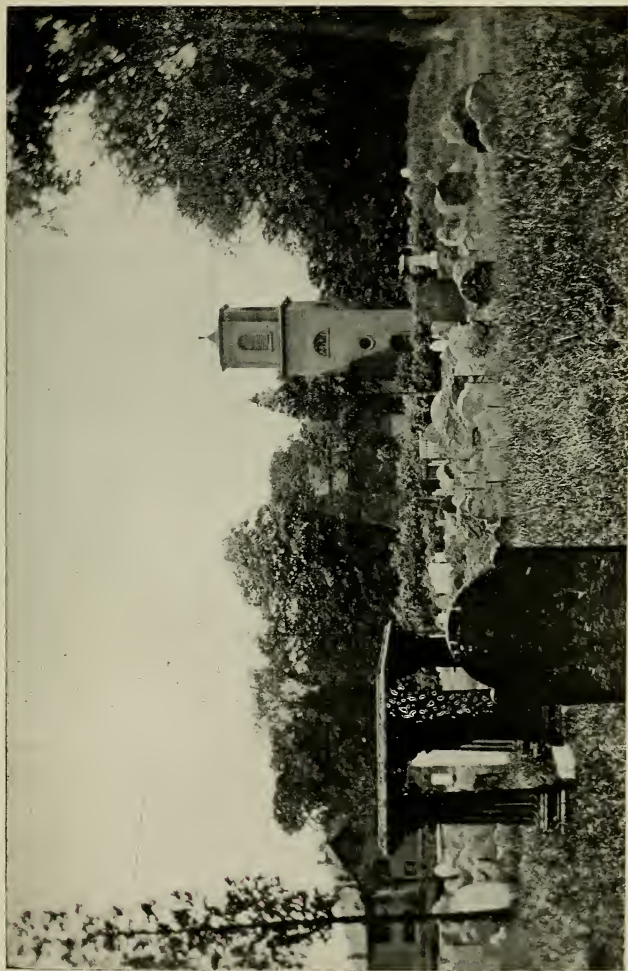
² Middlesex Deeds, 279/411.

³ *Boston Death Records*, *passim*, where are also set down, at this period, a considerable number of deaths of other "colored people" bearing the Vassall patronymic — doubtless the remnants of the households of John, William, and other relatives of Colonel Henry. See also *Cambridge Vital Records*, ii, 772.

⁴ Middlesex Deeds, 294/248, etc.

⁵ Memoir of Lothrop, by Dr. A. P. Peabody. *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proceedings*, 2d Series, iii, 169.

⁶ She died in 1847 and was buried in the family tomb under Christ Church. Harris, *Vassals of New England*, 22. A letter from this biographer, dated 1862 and preserved in the church files, gives, along with other details of this matter, a copy of the "pass." It extended the privilege also to the members of Darby's family, consisting, at its date, of a daughter and two grandchildren. All apparently predeceased him.



CHRIST CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE, FROM THE GRAVEYARD

Henry Vassall was buried (1760) beneath the church, his brother John (1747) beneath the table-shaped monument in the foreground.

munion. One of the most touching sights of the mid-century in Cambridge was to see this octogenarian representative of "the constant service of the antique world" deferentially waiting till all the white "quality" had partaken, and then creeping forward in lonely humility to receive the Sacrament.

'T is ended now, the sacred feast;
Yet on the chancel stair
For whom awaits the white-robed priest?
Who still remains to share
The broken body of his Lord,
To drink the crimson tide
For us to-day as freely poured
As erst from Jesus' side?

'T is he, our brother — in the view
Of Him who died to free
His children, of whatever hue,
From sin's captivity.
Not to the children's board he comes,
Nor drinks the children's cup,
But meekly feeds him on the crumbs
The dogs may gather up.

Ne'er may the Ethiop's dusky skin
A lighter shade attain,
But One can cleanse the heart within
From sin's corroding stain.
Foremost on earth we taste the bliss
Our Banquet here supplies,
Nor know what station shall be his
When feasting in the skies.

SAMUEL BATCHELDER, JR., *circa* 1856.

Finally, at the venerable age of ninety-two, Darby Vassall was accorded the honor he had so long anticipated, and under circumstances of solemnity and publicity which he never could have dared to picture in his fondest dreams. On the afternoon of October 15, 1861, the old slave was duly interred in the Vassall tomb. The service took place precisely one hundred years from the day the church was formally dedicated under the auspices of his father's master, and in the midst of the elaborate observances marking that centennial; during the first feverish excitement, too, of that

titanic struggle that was to abolish all slavery. Such a combination of circumstances made the poor negro's funeral a memorable occasion.¹ Among the notable gathering were such well-known medical men as Morrill Wyman and Oliver Wendell Holmes, for the opportunity was taken to examine and identify the remains already in the vault.² Soon afterward, by order of the city authorities, it was permanently sealed,³ and with it the last chapter in the story of Henry Vassall.

[The concluding portion of this paper, on certain uses of the Vassall house during the Revolution, will appear in the next volume of these *Publications*.]

¹ See the *Boston Traveller*, October 16, 1861; *Cambridge Chronicle*, October 19, 1861, etc.

² "The vault contained nine coffins. The upper one of a row of three on the north side contained as indicated by the plate the remains of Catherine Graves Russell, died Sep. 5, 1847. The one below it, somewhat decayed, contained the remains of a woman, supposed to be the wife of Colonel Vassall, died in 1800. The lower coffin held the remains of a man, doubtless Colonel Vassall, its appearance and position seeming to indicate its priority in the vault. On the south side were the coffins of four young children and two adults. Of the four, all were considerably broken and decayed. Scarcely any remains were perceivable — merely a few detached bones. The largest might have been that of a child two years old, and was in the best preservation. The one that seemed to be the oldest was marked with nail-heads 'E.R., BORN & DIED JAN. 27, 1770' . . . In this coffin were noticed a number of cherry stones, the kernels eaten out by some mouse which had carried them thither, secure of a safe retreat. The upper of the two large coffins on which these small ones rested contained the bones of a man over forty-five years of age. The lower limbs were covered thick with hay, seeming to indicate transportation. No clue was obtained to the person of the occupant. [Undoubtedly Lieutenant Brown. See *post*.] The remains in the lower coffin were supposed to be those of Mrs. Russell, wife of Dr. Charles Russell, died in 1802." Harris, *Vassalls of New England*, 13, n.

³ After discussing the question at several meetings, the parish, to avoid possible legal complications with the descendants of the owners of the tomb, petitioned the Cambridge aldermen, and obtained from them an order dated April 5, 1865, that it should be "permanently closed." The entrance at the west end was bricked up, a slate slab placed against it bearing the original proprietor's name (misspelled), the stone steps which led down to it were removed, and the slope filled in level with the rest of the cellar floor. Parish Records, vol. 2, *passim*, especially page 294.

APPENDIX A

[From *Middlesex Probate Files*, No. 23336, Old Series]

Inventory of the Real & Perfonnell Estate belonging to Henry Vassall late of Cambridge Esq^r Deceas'd —

House Lands Stables &c. £1000 0 0

In the Best Room

1 Large pier Glafs £5. 2 Sconce Ditto 6.6.8 2 Large & 6 small
Chairs £3 Jappan Tea Table 12/ 14 18 8
3 Family Pictures £3. Nine Enameld Cups & Saucers 6 Coffe
Cups Bowl &c. on the Tea Table £1 4 0 0

In the Clofitt

11 China Dishes 27 Enameld plates 4 Burnt China 6 Bowls &
plates 6 Images 2 China Mugs 2 Glafs Cups 5 Beer Glafs
1 Salver 1 pair Branch Candlesticks 1 Dozⁿ Wash Hand
Glafses 6 Saucers pick'd 23 Glafs Bucketts 15 Wine Glafses
2 Dozⁿ Jelly Ditto 1 Tray 2 Decanter 9 7 8

In the Boffatt

3 China Bowls 13 China plates 2 Dishes China Tray 7 Cups
& Saucers Wash Hand Bafon Glafs Salver 4 8 8
Turkey Carpett 1 6 8

In the Blue Room

1 Sconce £5 2 large & 4 small Chairs £2.8 1 Tea Table be-
longs to Mrs. Rufsell £1.10 8 18 0
1 Round Table 6/8 Brafs And Irons 10/ 0 16 8

In the Clofitt

40 plates some broke of Different China £2.13.4 2 Dozⁿ &
½ Blue & White China £1.12 4 5 4
4 pickled plates 5/ 2 Delph Fruit Basketts 4/ 2 Stone Ditto 4/
3 Delph punch Bowls 8/ 4 China 3 Broke 17/4 1 18 4
Glafses in y^e Clofitt £1 6.8 Basket 5/ 3 Scollop Shells 4/
3 China Dishes one broke 12/ 2 7 8

In the Boffatt

1 Dozⁿ China plates £1.6.8 punch Bowl 13/4 Stone Turine &
Dish 8/ Stone pickled pott 6/ 2 14 0
1 Dozⁿ Large & Small Blue & White China Dishes £2 Glafs in
y^e Boffatt 18/ Jappan Salver 2/8 Grotto 4/ 3 4 8

In the Keeping Room

2 Sconce Glases £3.6.8	Marble Table £2.13.4	One large & one small mehogny Table £2	8	0	0	
2 Round Straw Bottom'd Chairs 6/8	Eight Old Leather Bottom'd Chairs £1.4	Mr Sherly picture 2/8	1	13	4	
Rum Case 10/	And Irons Shovel & Tongs 14/8	pair of Large Tongs 6/8	prospective Glafs 8/	1	19	4
Old Carpit 4/	Old Plate & Knife Baskett with 6 Buck handled Knives & forks 6/		0	10	0	

In the Clofitt

9 Stone Dishes 8/	Doz ⁿ Stone plates 6/	Jelly Glases 1/	Ten Wine Glases & Baskett 6/8	Earthen pitcher 1/	1	2	8
parcel Broken Glafs & China mended 4/	Tobacco Tongs /8 hatchet & mallet for Sugar /6	small Scive /2			0	5	4
Glafs musturd pott 1/4	Glafs for Vinegar & Oyl /4	3 Salts 1/4	Cork puller /4	Glafs Candlestick & Delph Bowl 1/6	0	4	10
Cloaths Brush 1/	small Decanter 2/	14 China Plates £1			1	3	0

In the Little Entry

6 Leather Bucketts	1 Glafs Lanthorn £1.15		1	15	0
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In the Little Room

Old Sconce Glafs £1.16	Doz ⁿ Candle moulds £1	three Guns £3	silver hilted sword £2		7	16	0
Mourning Sword 5/	Hanger 18/	Red Housing 8/	small Dish 8/	Checquer Board 3/	2	2	0
Case of Mathamatical Instrumts 8/	Shaving Box & Rafors 6/	Tools & Broken thing in y ^e Clofitt 8/			1	2	0

In the Kitchen

Copper Stew pan £1.4	Dutch Oven £1	Four large & small Bell mettled Skillets £1.10			3	14	0	
Old Copper Ladle 4/	Fish Kittle Old 12/	Two Copper potts for meat £2.10	Four Iron 2 large 2 small 6/		3	12	0	
2 Iron Skillets 2/	Two Iron Dish Kittles 1/4	Iron Tea Kittle one old Copper one 6/	three Grind Irons 10/		0	19	4	
2 Frying pans 8/	Toast Iron 1/4	Chaffing Dish 1/	three And Irons 8/	Fender /8	Tongs & peal 4/	1	3	0
Jack £2.8	2 large spits 8/	small Ditto 1/	Six Broken Brafs Candlesticks 7/	Flower Box 1/	Lamp 3/	3	8	0
Coffa pott 5/	three Tin Dish & One plate Cover 4/	Tin Graters 1/	Scales & Weights £1			1	10	0
plate Rack 3/	Old Table 3/	Tin Fender 12/	Six Old Straw bottom'd Chairs /8	Iron Spider 2/	Rolingpin 1/	1	9	0
Marble mortar 15/	Seven Trammels 7/	Copper Fountain £1.8	Eight Cloaths Basketts 18/			3	8	0
Tin Ginger bread & other pans 3/6	2 Trays & Meal Trough 3/	Meal Chest 4/	2 pair Flat Irons Old 1/			0	11	6

Iron Box & 3 Grates 1/6	4 Old Chairs 1/	And Irons & Tongs	
6/	Old Bedstead & Table leaves 12/		1 0 6

In The Marble Chamber

Blue Harrateen Bed & Curtains £2.8	Easy Chairs £1.16	fix	
setting Chairs £4.16			9 0 0
Dressing Table belongs to Mrs Russell			
Dressing Glafs £1.4	three Cushings for Windows 12/	3 Glafs	
Lamps £1.10	2 Carpitts 16/		4 2 0
Feather Bed Bolfter & pillows 5 ^{ld} 3	@ 1/6 is £4	Bedstead 6/	
8 pair Blanketts £4.6.8			8 12 3
4 Rugs £1.10	Small Feather Bed 6 ^{ld} 0	£3.6.8	4 16 3

In the Green Chamber

Green Harrateen Bed & Curtains £1.8	Old Easy Chair 6/	fix	
setting Chairs £2.8	Dressing Table 16/		4 18 0
Dressing Glafs 18/	Feather Bed Bolfter & pillows 6 ^{ld} 0	£3.12	
Bedstead £1	small Table 5/	And Irons 4/	5 19 0

In the Cader Chamber

Green Harrateen Bed & Curtains Old 12/	2 mehogony Desks		
£4.10	Medicine Box 12/	Table £1.4	6 18 0
Feather Bed Bolfter & pillows 6 ^{ld} 0	£4	Mattrafs Bed 12/	
Bedstead 12/	Large Trunk 12/	3 old Chairs 8/	6 4 0
6 Old Carpetts 12/	portmantle Trunk 10/	small Scales &	
Weights 16/	Counterpin £1.4/		3 2 0
Wash Hand Bafon & Chamber pott			0 0 1

In the Little Chamber

Old Linnin Bed & Curtains 8/	Bed Bolfter & pillows 5 ^{ld} 0	£3.6.8	
Bedstead 6/	2 Old Chairs 2/	Trunk 12/	4 14 8
Allabaster Image 1/6	small Looking Glafs 4/	Great Chair 8/	
6 Cushions 9/	4 stone Chamber potts 1/		1 3 6

In the Entry Chamber

Small Bed Bolfter & pillow £2.5	Bedstead 6/		2 11 0
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In the Kitchen Chamber

Bedstead 12/	2 Feather Beds	Bolfters 1 pillow 1 ^{ld} 2	£6.10
Old Desk & Book Case £1.10	Old Desk 6/		8 18 0
Old Dressing Table 10/	4 old Chairs 1/4	small Looking Glafs	
3/	pair Dogs 3/	Old Tongs & Shovel 2/8	1 5 0
		Warming pan 5/	

In the Entry

Mehogony Table £1.4	34 Great & small pictures £1.14		2 18 0
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On the Stair Case

33 Great & small Glafs pictures £2.8	51 Great & small pictures £6		8 8 0
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In the Chamber Entry

28 Great & small pictures	£1.12.6					1	12	6
22 Damask Table Cloath @ 10/8 is	£11.14.8	16 Old & Other						
Damask Napkins @ 2/ is	£1.12					13	6	8
12 Diaper Napkins @ 1/6 is 18/		12 Old Diaper Table Cloaths						
£1.10	9 pair old Holland Sheets @ 13/4 is	£6				8	8	0
2 pair of small Holland Sheets @ 12/ is	£1.4	3 pair & one Sheet						
old @ 16/ is	£2.16.					4	0	0
2 pair of New Cotton Linnen Sheats @ 10/ is	£1	2 pair & small						
Ditto @ 8/4 is	£1.5					2	5	0
3 pair of Old Cotton Linnin Ditto	£1.10	24 old pillow Cafes 8/				1	18	0
Best pewter 105 ^{ld} @ 1/6 is	£7.17.6	Old pewter 70 ^{ld} @ 1/ is	£3.10			11	7	6
4 Braf Kittles 90 ^{ld}	£4.17.2					4	17	2
Crimfon Velvett Furnature for Horse	£6	Green Ditto Cloath old						
£1.4 Saddle 18/						8	2	0

In the Stable

pair of Horses Old	£12	Coach with Harnes	£12	Chariott	£50			
Chaise with Harnes	£5.6.8					79	6	8
Old Harnes 3/	Curricles Carriage 12/	Chaise Body 12/	Old					
Chaise Body 6/	Old Curricle Harnes 6/					1	19	0
2 pair of Old Holsters 1/6	Garden Engine Hofe	£1.4	Old					
Wheels for y ^e Coach	£1.4					2	9	6
pair Joints 1/	Cross Cutt Saw 8/	2 Old Saddles 4/	Old					
Saddle 4/						0	17	0

In the Celler

Large Copper	£8	2 Iron Trivetts 9/	6 Old Wash Tubs 3/					
Dumb Betty 1/	2 Cyder Barrls 4/	fundry Cract & Broke						
stone potts on y ^e Stair way 5/	1 Gros of Bottles in forts	£1.6.8				1	11	8
1 Case of Large Bottles	£1.12	52 Bottles Great & small with Old						
Cafes 15/	3 Juggs & Jarr 13/					3	0	0
Copper Funnell	£1.10	Whole & Broken Juggs 4/	9 Doz ⁿ &					
½ Quart Bottles	£1					2	14	0
14 Old Cask	£1.4	Sand Bin 8/				1	12	0

Servants

Tony	£13.6.8	Dick	£6.13.4	James	£40			
Dorrenda	£12	Auber [? Cuba]	£20			60	0	0
Servants Beds & Beding	£1.12					32	0	0
Rolling Stone & Garden Tools	£1.4	6 Old Chairs in y ^e Summer				1	12	0
House 8/								

Plate

2 Cans	2 falt spoons	2 ^{oz} 24	Ounces	Tanker	3 ^{oz} 34	2 Butler Cups		
16 ½	small Salver	5 ^{oz}	Candlesticks	21 ½	Coffa pott	4 ^{oz} 6	Tea-	
pott	19 ^{oz}	4 Salts	10 ½	Cream pott	5 ¾	Tea Kittle	4 ^{oz} 3	stand

for Ditto 23 $\frac{3}{4}$	Chaffing Dish 24 $\frac{1}{2}$	Chaffing Dish 21 $\frac{1}{2}$	2 por-
ringers 19 $\frac{1}{4}$	6 spoons 14	Salver 16	3 Large & 1 Small
spoon 17 $\frac{1}{4}$	punch strainer 5	Snuffers & Stand 2	small falt
spoons Tea Finger 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	stand with Casters 61 $\frac{1}{4}$	1 Doz ⁿ	
Tea spoons & strainer 6	small Ditto pepper Box	punch	
Ladle large spoon 15 ^{oz}	porringer 4	spoons 17 $\frac{1}{2}$	1 Doz
Desert spoons & Forks 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	Handles for Desert Knives 17 $\frac{1}{2}$		
1 Doz Great spoons y ^e	Handles for Knives & Forks 76 $\frac{1}{2}$		
Marrow spoon 1 Ounc & $\frac{1}{2}$			
The Amount of the whole plate is Six Hundred Ounces @			
6/8 oz			200 0 0
Case for Knives & Forks £3.6.8	2 Glafs Cruett & Salts 6/	Case	
for y ^e Desert Knives & Forks £1.10			5 2 8
Case of Desert Knives & Forks £1.8	Calabash Tipt with Silver 3/		
Gold Whater £13.6.8	5 Labels 4/		15 1 8
1 pair of Horse Nitts £2	1 Hammock £1.8	Carpett £1.10	
Old Knife & Fork 7 Ounces @ 6/8	£2.6.6		7 4 6
			£1671 2 3

Books¹

Chambers Dict: 2 Vols £2	Bailey Ditto 6/8	Hist. of Religion	
2 Vols 18/	Tacitus Eng ^d 2 Vols 8/		3 12 8
Pridieux Connect: 2 Vol 18/	Trial of y ^e Earl of Macclesfield 2/		
Tillotsons Sermons 3 vol 12/			1 12 0
Survey of y ^e Globe 1/4	Bentivollio & Urinia province Laws		
Tempery Ditto	Grotius Countess pembroke 4/		0 5 4
Bible 6/	Collect of Voyages 4 Vols. £1	Quincy Dispensatory 4/	
Method with y ^e Deist 2/	Gents Instruct ^r 2/		1 14 0
Hist of W ^m Stevens 1/6	5 Vol Clarendon Hist. of y ^e Rebellion		
first misling 5/	Lock on Human Understanding 8/		0 14 6
Vindication of y ^e Deffence of Xanity 2 Vol 6/8	Short way Teach-		
ing y ^e Languages /8	5 Vols Roman His by Eachad 5/		0 12 4
pridiaux Life of Mahomet 1/	Bulls Sermons 4 Vols 4/	Bland	
Disapline 1/	Hist Revolution of portugal 1/6		0 6 6
Hamilton Acct of East Ind: 2 Vol 3/	Life of Marlbro 2 Vol 12/		
1.3. & 4 Vol Rollin Bell Lett 5/	Dio Xian Rit 12/		1 2 0
Nature Displayd 3 Vol 8/	Hist of y ^e Turks 4 Vol 12/	Shaftbury	
Char: 3 Vol 12/	Hist of China 4 Vol 12/		2 4 0
The Prater. 1/6	Tatler 4 Vol 8/	Conduct of Married Life 3/4	
Modern Travels 4 Vol 10/8	Swift Works 13 Vol £1		2 3 6
Lydia 4 Vol 4/	Robinson Crusoe 2 Vol 2/	Comical Hist 2 Vol.	
2/8	Jofhua Truman 2 Vol 2/8		0 11 4
Mirza & Fatima 1/4	Friends 2 Vol 4/	Betty Thoughtless 4 Vol	
4/	S ^r Chas Goodville 2 Vol 3/	Hap Orph ⁿ 2/8	0 15 0

¹ Several of these books were contributed by Mrs. Vassall from the much smaller library of her father, Isaac Royall, Senior. See his inventory of 1741, Middlesex Probate, 19545, Old Series, where the prices rule far higher — but partly because then figured in Old Tenor. Henry Vassall added to his shelves from time to time: "1758 Jan'y 9th. Cash pd Books £9.10."

New Attalantis 4 Vol 8/	Mifs Cadiero 4 Vol 5/	Don Quixote 5 Vol 5/	Cafsandra 4 Vol 5/	Vade Mecom 1/	1	4	0
Life of M ^r Anderfon 4/	Whicherly plays 3/	Bishop of London Sermons 2 Vol 5/	Du Clos Maners of y ^e Age 4/		0	16	0
Valet 2 Vol 4/8	Memors of Man of Quality 2 Vol 3/	West Deffence of y ^e Refurrection 2/	Shakspear Work 10/ 8 Vol		0	19	8
Turkish Spy 7 Vol 14/	Spet [? Spectator] 8 Vol	£1	Guardian 2 Vol 5/	Rollan Anch ^t Hist 10 Vol	£1.4	3	3 0
Free Holder 1/6	Anti Gallican 3/	Travel of Cyrus 2/	Cleopatra 8 Vol 16/	Stage Coach 1/		1	3 6
Betty Barns 4/8	Conver ⁿ Moral Enter: 1/6	Fortunate Country Maid 2 Vol 4/8	Life of Cleavland 9/4			1	0 2
M ^{rs} Bhen plays 4 Vol 6/	Agreable Ugliness 1/	Hist of Pilgram 2/8	Venetian Tales 1/	Ecepd Gaz ^r 1/		0	11 8
Miramaga 2/7	Gays Fables 3/	Cha ^s Osberns Esq ^r 1/6	Tele-machus 3/	Tales of y ^e Faries 8/		0	18 1
Love Letters 1/4	Hayward Nov ^{ls} 4 Vol 4/	Otway plays 4/	W ^m Binglefield 2/			0	11 4
Lord Landown Works 3 Vol 5/	Hist of Scot Family /6	Rigester 1756 /6	Chyne English Malady 4/	Roderick Random 3 Vol. 3/		0	13 0
True Merit True Happinefs 2 Vol 4/	Female Quixote 2 Vol 4/8	Pertian Tales 3 Vol 6/	Hist of Young Lady of Distin 2 vol 4/			0	18 8
Joseph Andrews 2 Vol 4/	Lovers 1/	Peter Wilkins 2 Vol 5/	Lucy Villiers 2 Vol 5/	Amelia 4 Vol 10/	Farquhur play 2 Vol 4/	1	9 0
Modern Adventures 2 Vol 5/	1. 2 4 & 5 vol of David Simple 11/	Chinefe Tales 2 ^d vol 1/	Dicky Gotham & Doll Clod 2 ^d Vol 2/			0	19 0
Advent of Count Fathom 1 ^t Vol 2/	Congreave plays 3 Vol 4/	1 ^t Vol of Perfian Letters 1/4	Ditto of Telemichus 3/			0	10 4
Adventures of Cap ^t Greenland 4 Vol 9/4	1. & 3 Vol. of Pervian Tales 2/8	Select Novals 9 Vol 6/	Humerest 1 ^t Vol. 1/	1 ^t Vol of mogul Tales 1/	Ditto of Select Novels 1/	2 ^d vol of popes Works 1/	Scotch Marine /6
2 ^d Vol of y ^e Parish Girl 4/	Iack Conner 2 Vol 4/	Harriet Stewart 2 Vol 4/	2 ^d Vol Female Foundling 1/6	1 & 2 Vol Le Bell Afsembly 2/8		0	12 2
1 & 3 Vol Religious Philosopher 4/	2 ^d Vol of Ditto 1/	1 ^t Vol of Canterbury Tales 2/	Bradley Compleat Body Husbandry 3/	1 ^t Vol of Mortames Art of Husbandry 1/	Ditto of Luis 14 th 2/	7 th Vol Life of Queen Ann 2/	Bradly Anch ^t Husbandry 2/
1 ^t vol of Modern Husbandry 1/	2 ^d vol Hist of Jews 1/	2 ^d vol Epistle for Ladys 2/	Life of St Ignatius /2	Shirlock on Death 1/		0	5 2
Compleat French Master 1/	Hist of y ^e World 1/	present state of Britain 1/	Ditto 1/	Telemachus French /6		0	4 6
Crofflin Anamadverfions on y ^e Talmud /1	Adventures of Gile Blas 4 Vol. 5/	1. 2. 3. & 6 Vol Arabian Nights Enter 4/				0	9 1
Adventures of M ^r Lovel 2/	Leonora Female Quixote & Otway broken Voll 2/					0	4 0



HENRY VASSALL'S BOOKPLATE

(Slightly enlarged)

This very scarce plate is almost unknown to collectors. It was discovered in the "library" of Christ Church, Boston, in a copy of the rare work *Defence of the Christian Revelation*, printed at London in 1748, "to be dispersed in His Majesty's Colonies & Islands in America."

See page 35, n.

We the Subscribers Appointed by the Hon^{ble} Sam^l Danforth have Appriz'd the Above Inventory belonging to the ^{sd} Henry Vassall Esq^r Decea'd

Sept^r 8. 1769. Dr Ruffel (one of the admin^{rs})
exhibited the foregoing Inventory on Oath
Sept^r 30th. 1769 M^{rs} Penelope Vassell the other
administ^r made oath to the same Inventory—
S. DANFORTH J. prob.

HENRY PRENTICE
EBEN^s STEDMAN
EBENEZ^r BRADISH
all sworn before the Judge

APPENDIX B

[From Middlesex Probate Files, No. 23342, Old Series]

Middlesex fs

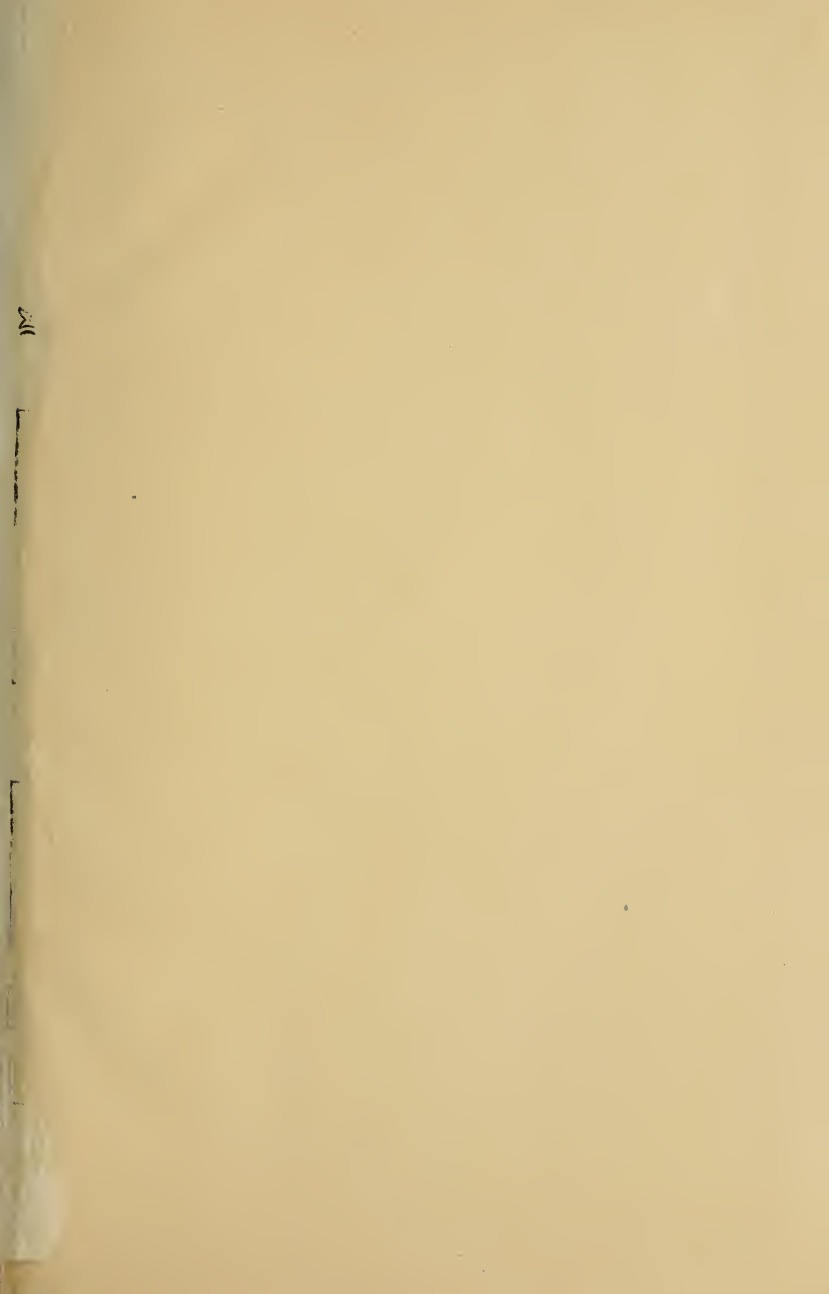
An Inventory of the Personal Estate whereof Penelope Vassall Late of Cambridge In the County of Middlesex who fled from her Habitation to the Enemies of this State: was Seisd in the aforsd County, taken by us the Subscribers Appointed By the Hon^{bl} John Winthrop Esq Judge of Probate of wills &c for Said County as the Same was Shewn us by William How appointed Agent to the Same Estate by the aforsd Judge

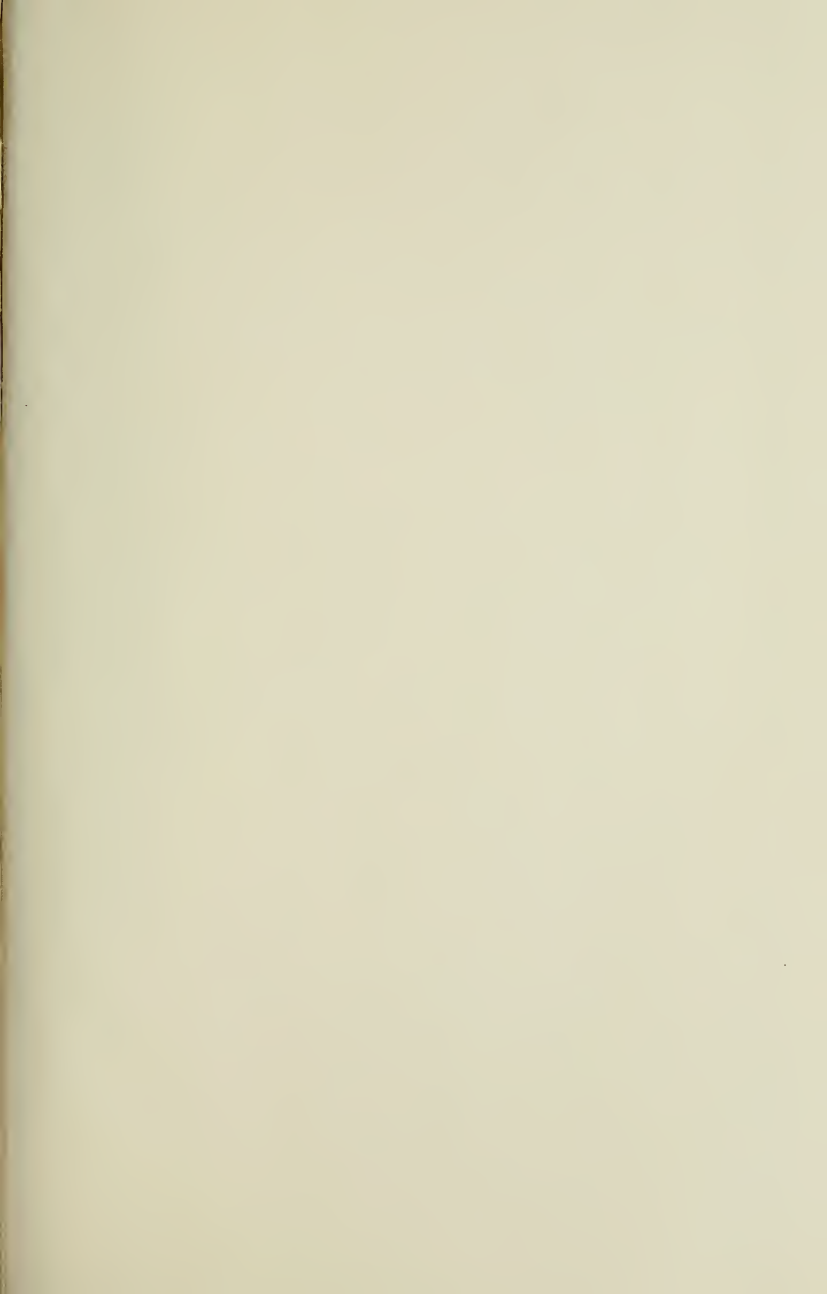
to one Chariot £100	one Iron Barr 37/	. . . . .	101 "	17 "	0
one pair Large handirons 52/	one Small Do 34/	. . . . .	4 "	6 "	0
one trivit 58/	Some old harnis 24/	. . . . .	4 "	2 "	0
one pair Shears 12/	oldiron 36/	one Box 24/	. . . . .	3 "	12 "
one wicker Basket 12/	one hamper with lumber 10/	. . . . .	1 "	2 "	0
one tinn fender 60/	two old Saffhes £5	. . . . .	8 "	0 "	0
three bee hives 30/	two Buckets 36/	. . . . .	3 "	6 "	0
five Canvis pictures 90/	fifteen Large Do. £6.15	. . . . .	11 "	5 "	0
Eighteen D ^o N ^o 2 72/	thirteen D ^o N ^o 3 40/	. . . . .	5 "	12 "	0
Sixteen Small Do 40/	four Glafs D ^o 48/	. . . . .	4 "	8 "	0
nineteen gilt D ^o 76/	one Glafs Lanthorn 45	. . . . .	6 "	1 "	0
one marble table £9	one plate grate 48/	. . . . .	11 "	8 "	0
two Large Canifters 12/	part of two Cariges £24	. . . . .	24 "	12 "	0
one Churn 18/	one Large picture 20/	. . . . .	1 "	18 "	0
one negro man Named toney		. . . . .		

CAMBRIDGE June y^o 24. 1778

AARON HILL
W^m GAMAGE
THO^s BARRETT

MIDDLESEX 11 Jany 1779 Exhibited upon Oath by the Agent WILLIAM HOWE.
before me J WINTHROP J. Prob—









Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:



MAY 1998
BOOKKEEPER
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, L.P.
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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